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Poetics of the Will and the Grounding of
Ethics: An Historical,
Methodological, and Comparative Study of Maurice Blondel's
L'Action (1893)

Dominic DiCarlo

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

March 1987

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ABSTRACT

Poetics of the Will and the Grounding of Ethics: An Historical, Methodological, and Comparative Study of Maurice Blondel's L'Action (1893)

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Concordia University, 1987

The thesis examines Maurice Blondel's L'Action (1893) as foundational ethics that attempted to rectify Catholic philosophy in the light of modern thought, in particular, as a response to the legacy left by Kant's philosophy, namely, the separation of ethics from logic and morality from metaphysics. Aside from this moral crisis, Blondel is also seen as a corrective to the consequent moral crises (positivism, nihilism, pessimism) that had emerged in the nineteenth-century once theology had lost its epistemological foundation.

~~Two streams of thought, one philosophical, the other~~
theological, were attempts to come to terms with these moral crises in the nineteenth-century. It is shown that both schools provided the form and the content for Blondel's philosophy of action. Blondel's philosophy of action, therefore, is an end result of both these streams whose roots go back to their initial confrontation with the Kantian legacy, namely, subjectivism, the priority of practical

reason, and the inaccessibility of the transcendent to reason. The thesis, therefore, argues that ethics from Blondel's position is a reflection on the dynamic operation of a divided will, mediated by action, as it unfolds endlessly towards an undifferentiated transcendent horizon. The specificity of a Blondellian ethic, however, is grounded on the differentiated transcendent order upon which the disclosure of man's destiny is articulated.

Finally, the thesis attempts to vindicate a Blondellian ethical foundation by comparing it to Jean Nabert's philosophical and religious ethic which is the attempt to appropriate and regain the originary affirmation of the "I am" from which desire is separated as it deploys itself in the form of inclinations and tendencies. Ethics for Nabert, unlike the formalism of Kant, is a hermeneutical reading of the history of our desire to be (worthwhile), masked in the form of inclinations and tendencies, as an aspiration towards unity. The thesis argues that Blondel is doing a similar ethics but on a universal scale and the insistence on the mediation of action as a fulcrum from which the universal unfolding of the will takes place situates L'Action(1893) as a poetics of the will in a Catholic Christological sense.

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For my three Fates: Clarinda, Gesilda, and Stella.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will be a study of Maurice Blondel's L'Action(1893) from three perspectives. The first viewpoint will examine L'Action(1893) in an historical context that situates it as an attempt to come to terms with nineteenth-century problematics concerning Catholic thought in confrontation with a legacy left by Kant.¹ In a second perspective L'Action(1893) will be examined as a foundational grounding of ethics. Lastly, the thesis will view L'Action(1893) in terms of Jean Nabert's reflexive philosophy which will give a solid footing to the overall thesis, namely, that L'Action(1893) is not simply a work in Christian apologetics but that it falls within a hermeneutical methodology that Paul Ricoeur calls a "poetics of the will".²

From an historical point of view, it can be said that, while the Enlightenment had promised the liberation of man under the banner of emancipated Reason, by the nineteenth-century, science had begun to monopolize morality. It was, however, the Kantian separation of ethics from logic and morality and consequently morality from metaphysics that set the stage for the Catholic crisis in which moral freedom was pitted against the deterministic view of modern science.³ If Kant pleaded to a formally necessary law that

is binding on a rational will, thus implying an independence from all other consideration and motives, this radical freedom or autonomy of a pure moral will goes counter to any determination of the will that is crucial for moral Catholic thought and labels it, summarily heteronomy.⁴

Blondel addressed himself to this Catholic crisis by seeking a Verstehen of concrete living while Kant had grounded an Erklären of things. By unifying theory and praxis, reason and morality, Blondel wished to recast Christian principles in a new manner that would help Christianity come to terms with the modern world.⁵ In spite of the modernist crisis which in a large measure emanated from Blondel, it goes without saying that Blondel looms largely as a pivotal figure in modern Catholic thought.⁶

Although treating Blondel as a starting point in the modernist movement is traditional currency this thesis will look at Blondel as an end product of nineteenth-century philosophical thought that began with Maine de Biran and a Catholic apologetic school of thought whose roots go back to Louis Bautain.⁷ In addition, the thesis also views Blondel in terms of a French tradition that extends into the philosophies of Jean Nabert and Paul Ricoeur.⁸

The reason why Nabert is so important is because he steers a course between Kant and Maine de Biran which brings out the distinction between critique and reflection. The difference between the two is that critique seeks the

structure of a transcendent subject while reflection tries to liberate the inner life of the self.¹⁰ What formalism does in Kant is that it transposes a critique of knowledge onto the practical which of course carries with it a great price because "the formalism of duty is separated from the pathology of desire".¹¹ Yet Nabert's reflection on acts in the Biranian tradition also brings him close to Spinoza's meaning of ethics, namely, that by applying reflection to the becoming we appropriate for ourselves the primary being from which we are separated or have fallen from.¹² The distinction between critique and reflection corresponds to the distinction between moral philosophy and ethics.¹³ The difference is that Kant's critique corresponds to a moral philosophy because he does not separate the rational form of the imperative from the "facticity of desire".¹⁴ Reflection in Nabert's case does not reduce the self to a transcendental subject, hence his ethic is "the reasoned history of our desire to be".¹⁵

It is by comparing Blondel with Nabert that we will be able to see how L'Action (1893) provides us with a foundation for ethics because it is grounded in the exigencies of action and ultimately in the appropriation of a teleological reflection.

CHAPTER I

INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL CLIMATE

The Legacy of Kant

It was in 1801 that Charles Villers published Philosophie de Kant ou principes fondamentaux de la philosophie transcendante, the very same year that he wrote a report on the subject to Napoleon.¹ Villers emphasized Kant's victory over empiricism with his epistemology, which made freedom and morality unimpeachable. Villers believed that it was Kant's destiny to reform French morals and French philosophy. At the same time, in 1801, a publication of a French translation of a Dutch work by Kinker entitled Essai d'une exposition succincte de la critique de la raison pure made an appearance. Then eight years later, in 1809, in an article (Sur l'existence et sur les derniers systemes de metaphysique qui ont paru en Allemagne) Frederic Ancillon, a member of the Berlin Academy, complained how the German language made it so difficult to understand these systems.² Ancillon believed that the starting point of philosophical problems emanated from a dualism expressed in various ways such as subject/object, thought/nature, freedom/necessity, mind/matter, psychology/physics and so forth.³ According to Ancillon this dualism was not

constructed a priori but was really a primitive fact recognized by Descartes in the Cogito such that the world was separated into two worlds of reflection. Ancillon believed that it was the task of philosophy to reestablish the lost unity within duality.⁴ Descartes with his innatism made awareness of the real world a product of principles within the subject while Locke reduced the foundations of knowledge to the outer world. Ancillon argues that Kant preserved the link between the innatism of Descartes and the empiricism of Locke.⁵ But Kant's argument is circular, argues Ancillon because if you seek reality you turn to the object which refers back to the subject which refers back to the object and so forth. Fichte's absolute ego and Schelling's view of of an absolute which would be neither subject nor object did not rectify the problem because they are left with uncertainty or the void.

The view that German philosophy had exhausted all avenues was also presented by Degérando in 1804 (Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie) and Madame de Staël in 1810 (De L'Allemagne).⁶ It was after two trips to Germany in 1803 and in 1805 that Madame de Staël composed De L'Allemagne which usurped the work of Villers concerning the study of German philosophy. She saw Leibniz as the natural successor to Descartes and Kant as the successor to Leibniz as a reaction to Locke's sensationalism. What Madame de Staël most admired in Kant, however, was his position concerning

morality and art, that is, the second and third critiques." Degérando's work had appeared at a time when the work of Villers had not many readers. In this way Degérando's work first introduced in France "les formes de la sensibilité", "les catégories de l'entendement", "jugements analytiques", and "jugements synthétiques". Also for the first time in France names like Jacobi, Fichte and Schelling had ears. It was also Degérando's work, it may be said, that gave Maine de Biran some ammunition needed to defend philosophy against de Bonald's traditionalism. Furthermore, it is also here that Victor Cousin took ideas for his history of philosophy and arrive at his eclecticism.⁹ Thus Degérando gave France its first serious history of philosophy and gave impetus to the spiritualistic eclecticism which rejected materialism and determinism and asserted the ontological priority of spirit over matter. Of the eclectics, Royer-Collard, Cousin, and Jouffroy. Copleston writes,

The eclectics were opponents of materialism and atheism and of the sensationalism of Condillac. At the same time, while believing in religious freedom and having no wish to see the Church subjected to persecution, they certainly did not admit the Church's claim to be the sole guardian of truth to the religious and moral spheres; nor had they any sympathy with the idea of an ecclesiastically inspired and controlled system of education. They aimed at promoting a philosophically-based religion, existing alongside official organized religion and working with it in important ways but not subject to ecclesiastical authority and destined perhaps to take the place of Catholicism as then known.¹⁰

Royer-Collard maintained that while Condillac reduced everything to fleeting sensations; he was unable to account

for the ability to judge that there is a permanent and causally active self as well as objects of externally directed perception. To Royer-Collard these judgements really belong to common sense and constitute the foundation for inductive science to be able to argue for the existence of God as ultimate cause. Hence there is no need for any supernatural authority to reveal the basic principles of religion and morality. As such, common sense and reason are sufficient.

Cousin, who would become France's 'philosophical dictator', did much to infiltrate German thought into France, having travelled to Germany in 1817 where he met Hegel for the first time and also in 1818 where he met Schelling and Jacobi.¹¹ This, I believe, contributed to making him advise philosophers to stop talking about Catholicism.¹² Cousin's subsequent trip to Germany in 1824 greatly increased his knowledge of German thought and Hegel, of course, spent much time with Cousin in Paris in 1827.¹³ Consequently Hegel became a big influence on Cousin.¹⁴

At the time of Laromiguière (1756-1837) and Royer-Collard (1763-1845), near the end of the Empire, philosophy was finally on its way to becoming basically an academic interest.¹⁵ It had passed from the salon to the tribune during the Revolution and had become the accomplishment of amateurs during the Consulat and Empire. Because of someone like Cousin philosophy was now treated

with respect and utmost seriousness and given a place in the educational system. It could no longer be viewed and disparged as the passion of the reformers and revolutionaries." But in the university it remained unproductive. Nothing could be said after Ideology since members of that school were as sectarian as the Catholics. But if the Ideologists had been open-minded they would have known that among their group a Maine de Biran was struggling with the deterministic philosophy."

Ideology and Catholicism were sterile. It was expository rather than being insightful. Stimulus, no doubt, had to come from outside of France." The middle course, later to be charted by Cousin between sensationalism and Catholicism, was initiated by Royer-Collard. The ideas that he imported from Scotland became influential in his day. Royer-Collard's pupil Cousin had found in common sense theory an inspiration of eclecticism and in Reid's theory of knowledge an inspiration for his spiritualism."

Although, as we saw, Kant's works were not translated until the beginning of the nineteenth-century, he had been known in France as early as the Revolution, and was looked upon by much of the public as a revolutionist. We note that Cabanis, as a correspondent for "Le Conservateur" wrote on September 2, 1779, that the representatives of the New Batavian Republic were "penetrated with the principles of the philosophy of Kant". It is important to note to what extent

Kant was already known in France from the point of view of political thinking prior to his acceptance as a philosopher who had demolished a long-standing rational objective philosophy upon which stood the edifice of theology. The preparation for Kant's emergence in France was however contrived. We take note that the new Leibniz, as Kant is called, was criticized for his vagueness and obscurity. The "Journal des Défenseurs de la Patrie" on March 6, 1800 quotes the Austrian general, Starry maintaining that Kantianism had corrupted the students of Heidelberg.¹⁷ Elsewhere the Moniteur (March 1, 1795), at that very early date, speaks of Kant as the prophet of the new political order.¹⁸ On January 3, 1796, there appeared an article on Kant's "Project of Perpetual Peace" whereby he is contrasted with the counter-revolutionary French. Kant is seen as a philosopher who professes "a republicanism not of France but of the entire world".¹⁹ This feeling that Kant was friendly to Republican ideals lingered in the popular mind of France.²⁰ While popular opinion of philosophy declined Kant's reputation also suffered with it but the philosophers did make the complaint that public hatred would be turned towards them at that time when Napoleon linked Kant's name with Cagliostro and "all the dreamers of Germany".²¹ Furthermore, it can be noted that the Gazette de France (Dec. 31, 1803) threw sarcasms at Kantianism.²²

However, the French philosophical public did show

interest in Kant as early as October 1794 when Muller, an Alsatian, announced that he would attempt a sketch of the critical philosophy. The sketch was not published but in that year there appeared a translation of the "Project of Perpetual Peace" and Imhoff's translation of "The Sentiment of the Beautiful and the Sublime".²⁵ On January 26, 1799, the Publicists announced that a French writer was working on a translation of the first Critique.²⁶ In the meantime, a series of articles in the Spectateur du Nord were being written by Charles Villers and Ph. Hudinger (Tranchant de Laverne).²⁷ By 1804, Schweighauser, writing on "The Present State of Philosophy in Germany" maintained that Kant's works were quite well known.²⁸

All of this, of course, showed to what an extent there was a concern with Kant as a moralist. However, what was missing was a complete and thoroughly clear exposition of Kant's total philosophy before there occurred in France what had already happened in Germany, namely the view that Kant was the "patriarch of skepticism and even of atheism".²⁹

Villers, in early articles, also maintained that those who knew Kant as a metaphysician only knew a part of him. There is more to Kant as a destructive critic than as a system builder.³⁰ What is presented is Kant's "Idea of what a Universal History Might Be in the View of a Cosmopolitan" and his "Theory of Pure Moral Religion". Kant's faith in a union of nations is echoed by Villers who saw Kant as a

prophet who foresaw the political turmoil as he had foreseen the discovery of Uranus. Much later Villers was to abuse the French public for not showing the same enthusiasm that he had for Kant. Villers' enthusiasm did make people aware of Kant. However, Kant's reputation as a scholar of morals and religious problems would not endear him to those of a skeptical cast of mind except much later when he would be known in France as a skeptic.³¹ The readers of Le Conservateur would find Kant to be an opponent of idealism, dogmatism and skepticism.³²

Kantianism was further spread by Ampere and Stapfer.³³ However, in addition to this, the Polish mathematician and philosopher J. Hoene-Wronsky published in 1793, "La Philosophie Critique Decouverte par Kant" which exposed the entire system of Kant's critical philosophy as well as what had been done in Germany as a consequent of Kant.³⁴ Elsewhere, Kinker's book Essai d'une Exposition Succinte de la Critique de Kant (Amsterdam, 1801, trans. LeFevre) inspired Destutt de Tracy to write the review. Destutt de Tracy's knowledge of Kant (like most of his contemporaries) was derived from Born's Latin version and not from the German originals.³⁵ What seemed to bother Destutt de Tracy was that, it seemed to him, Kantianism was, perhaps, a disguised new Platonism.³⁶ Laromiguerre, it must be noted, also viewed Kant with suspicion.

It was Villers' book that had the greatest impact on

at least the greatest influence in introducing Kant to the French public. Disturbed somewhat by the unbridled enthusiasm of Villiers' worship of Kant, Destutt de Tracy bluntly stated that "people profess the philosophical doctrine of Kant as they profess the theological doctrine of Jesus, Mohammed or Brahma".⁴⁷ Villiers, of course, was not happy that the new philosophy of the last twenty years, which he believed was of interest to all human sciences and to morality, was still unknown in France and that no one had undertaken the task of making it known to a larger public. Yet Villiers persisted and he displayed not only a knowledge of Kant but also of his antecedents. But the most important contribution that Villiers' book would make would be the influence on Madame de Stael.⁴⁸

To Madame de Stael, Kant was the new philosophy. She believed that while Kant is less poetic than Plato and less religious than Malebranche, nonetheless, Kant is more morally genuine than either. While Kant's philosophy tends to be obscure she maintains that what is attractive about Kant is the practical effects that the Kantian doctrine can have. It was the lack of moral dignity in France at the time that made her see the possibilities of Kantianism, in particular, the Kantian devotion to duty.⁴⁹ However it was Degerando's Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie that received the most favorable attention from serious philosophers. Like Villiers, he is disturbed by the barrier and gap that existed

between French and German men of letters.⁴⁰

Degerando saw in Kant a method that steers a middle course between skepticism and dogmatism, rationalism and empiricism, idealism and materialism. This, Degerando says, leads to three questions. How is knowledge possible? What is the law in virtue of which we form a chain of observed phenomena? What is the criterion of a priori and a posteriori knowledge? Degerando takes up these questions and gives Kant's solutions. The rest of his exposition is concerned with synthetic and analytic judgements, reason, matter and form, space and time, the categories and other particular aspects of Kantian thought and terminology.⁴¹

After the publication of Degerando's history, information on Kant's life, ethics, and metaphysics became available. It was then that philosophers began to study Kant not in synopses but in the original.⁴² Several groups began to pay very serious attention to Kant's entire enterprise: the Lyonnais group, the circle of Joubert including de Bonald, Fontaines, Mme. de Krudener and Chateaubriand, the group at Auteuil to which Degerando belonged, de Biran's philosophic club whose members included Ampère, Stapfer, Royer-Collard and the young Victor Cousin who was to become the most successful patron of the new critical philosophy.⁴³ Yet, in spite of this, Kant did not really play a great part in the philosophy of the early nineteenth-century in France. It was to be several years

later, when Cousin had reached his apogee that his students would begin to study Kant more closely. But Cousin's interest in Kant was not that intense. He was more interested in Schelling and Hegel with both of whom he was able to continue a lasting friendship. Yet Cousin did inspire the first complete and scholarly translations of Kant's Critique, that of Jules Barni.⁴⁴

Kant was not the only philosopher whose thought was imported into France by the French. It is important to note that what followed on the heels of Kant in Germany also found its way in a same package as Kant. Schelling, for example, was known only to a very small group prior to the time of Cousin. In fact, Schelling had been included by Degérando in his history and Ancillon in 1809 had spoken of Schelling as a follower and opponent of Kant, viewing him as a naturalist in contrast with Fichte, the transcendentalist.⁴⁵

Madame de Stael also covered Fichte and Schelling in a quick manner, yet Schelling was a great figure in Germany rivaled only by the youthful Hegel. Basically Fichte and Schelling provoked hostility or ridicule. Only Schweighauser's article "The Present State of Philosophy in Germany" was fair in the assessment of the post-Kantians, and did not feel that Fichte and Schelling were less worthy of consideration than Kant. The editors of the Melanges, however, which included Villers, were hostile to the post-Kantians, yet were respectful of Kant.⁴⁶

In 1817 the Melanges had a successor in the Archives philosophiques, politiques et littéraires directed by Royer-Collard, Guizot, Cousin, and their group. However, under the guidance of Royer-Collard, Cousin gave much respect to Fichte and Schelling.⁴⁷ Cousin had hoped to rectify the omission of Schelling from the French translation of Buhle's History of Modern Philosophy, but it was never realized in the Archives.⁴⁸ Instead he wrote on the development of his own idea on Locke, Reid, and Kant, on his distinction between spontaneity and reflection (refutation of Fichte), on real and ideal beauty, on Descartes' proofs of his own existence and so forth.⁴⁹ Finally the successor to the Archives was the Globe (1824-1831) which favored romanticism, was liberal in matters of politics, eclectic in philosophy, yet contained nothing on Schelling or Hegel, but, only two biographical articles on Fichte taken from the Nouvelle Revue Germanique.

Cousin had met Schelling on his visit to Germany in 1818, yet he never admitted in public the influence that Schelling had on him.⁵⁰ In public his interest in Schelling was detached as well as his interest in Plato and Aristotle. It was finally in 1866 that Cousin admitted borrowing from both Hegel and Schelling and spoke of Schelling's system as the "true system".⁵¹ Such admissions were never made in the open while he was a professor.

The first work of Schelling to be translated into

French (in 1835) was Schelling's preface to the German translation of Cousin's preface to his own Fragments Philosophiques translated as "Jugement de M. Schelling sur la philosophie de M. Cousin" by Wilm.²² Eight years later Schelling's System of Transcendental Idealism was translated into French.²³ By now the interest of the French public had been aroused. In 1833 the Revue des Deux Mondes published long articles by Barchou-Penhoen, the interpreter of Ballance and Fichte which gave a detailed exposition of both Schelling's philosophy of nature and his philosophy of history.²⁴ Schelling's philosophy of history was more well received than his philosophy of nature. What the French found more interesting was the notion that history is a synthesis of necessity and freedom, a new version of Kant's doctrine of freedom within the limits of duty. The idea of progress was now invested with the authority of the natural sciences. Barchou-Penhoen's readers were under the reign of Louis-Philippe, seen in 1833 as the synthesis of monarchy and democracy: the king was himself the incarnation of liberty identical yet different from necessity. It is easy to see why Schelling satisfied the needs of the people of France. What they suddenly discovered was that the secret of one's life is to be found in nature.²⁵ Certainly the romantics were pleased with the conformity of self-consciousness to the natural order.

Therefore, by and large, Schelling's introduction

into French thought was basically due to Ancillon and Madame de Stael, vaguely encouraged by Cousin and finally given the big push by Ravaissou in the second half of the nineteenth-century. It is axiomatic that after the Restoration the name Victor Cousin is synonymous with philosophy.

Victor Cousin's Eclecticism

We have noticed so far how the reception of Kant was marked by confusion and ambiguity on the part of the French public. The impact of German philosophy on French soil was slow because, mainly it was written in not just a foreign language that had to be mastered but, even more important, its view was such a radical departure from the French way of thinking. It was Cousin who provided the springboard for the French plunge into that German kind of subjective thinking that was beginning to arouse the French mind. The key to the French assimilation of German philosophical thought laid with Cousin's eclecticism.

Straight from the start, Cousin's philosophical goal was political in nature. The goal was to find a philosophy that would be non-Catholic and non-atheist and would provide for liberalism and not for republicanism. It was to be a philosophy of the media via, a philosophy of compromises. His first task was to get rid of the Sensationalism of the eighteenth-century, to combat the tradition of materialism

and atheism, to fight the hatred of Christianity, break the tradition of revolutionary violence and so forth.³⁸ He believed that the restoration was an obstacle to liberty and true philosophy. Around 1813 Cousin maintained that Condillac had synthesized together all the knowledge of Bacon, Descartes, Malebranche, and Locke concerning the method of philosophy and had expanded it. At this point Cousin realized that the proper method of philosophy laid in his hands and it was to be the method of the history of ideas.³⁹ However, within three years Cousin lost interest in Ideology and Condillac's philosophy. He was no longer concerned with combatting materialism and atheism.

Cousin realized that the pragmatism of sensationalism could not satisfy man's most pressing need, that is, the need for immutable principles that could anchor the spirit's limitless freedom.⁴⁰ In the meantime he rejected mysticism, insisting that it exaggerates its power and gives an incomplete account of human nature, and was concerned with mysticism leading to quietism. As such, it was the pragmatic effects of mysticism that bothered Cousin. In fact, Cousin understood mysticism as anti-rationalism. It was Cousin's empirical cast of mind that prevented him from accepting such a position: that there could be anything beyond experience. Cousin argued that there are certain general principles which the mind possesses (eg. substance, causality), that is, knowledge which preceded observation but is not explained by

it. Thus Cousin could admit that he agreed with Kant in maintaining that those principles are revealed by the mind's self-reflection.⁴¹

Methodically, Cousin stated that the first task of philosophy consists of the study of the Ego, which began with Descartes. According to Cousin the Ego retreated from observation and left only the phenomenal states to be observed. Therefore the study of the Ego was not made in order to prove its existence as Descartes had done but rather to describe its properties.⁴² What is important in Cousin's theory of spontaneity and reflection is the two forms of freedom. Reflection is the free movement of the intellect in attempting to seek a solution to a problem. As such it is premeditated and deliberate. Reflection, on the other hand, is retroactive, it is not creative; it manipulates the facts at hand. Spontaneity is the performance of knowledge itself. It cannot be articulated because language is the medium of reflection. Spontaneity, according to Leibniz, was the form inherent in the monads; it was the essence of the universe.⁴³ But Cousin believed that it is one of the two fundamental aspects of the world. Spontaneity is incomplete without reflection simply because it is action without knowledge and reflection is also incomplete without spontaneity, for without it, it lacks the material upon which it works.⁴⁴ Hence we see that the dialectic of spontaneity/reflection, cause/substance, a dialectic familiar

to post-Kantians in Germany, was already acknowledged to French readers. Cousin's knowledge of post-Kantians came second-hand through the readings of Degerando and Dubois yet he never acknowledged his debt to foreign thinkers and but he was overgenerous in his debt to respectable French thinkers.²³ It is here that we become aware of Cousin's political strategy in his philosophical manipulations. But the doctrine of eclecticism had its roots in two sources - the Reidian doctrine of common sense and the Kantian doctrine of transcendental unity of apperception.

Both see truth as the possession of something over and above the individual. But Cousin saw truth as the synthesis of past truths which in themselves are fragmentary. Therefore, for Cousin this synthesis was a method for a history of philosophy and he called his philosophy spiritualism because it is characterized as a subordination of the senses to the spirit, hence elevating mankind. Yet, in spite of Cousin's efforts there were critics such as Quinet, who called eclecticism a compromising philosophy which is easy to understand if you caught on to what Cousin was really doing. Soon it became common to characterize eclecticism as a "foreign plant in French soil". In spite of this Cousin openly allied himself with French thinkers such as Royer-Collard, Maine de Biran and Descartes.

As late as 1817 Cousin would not admit that the Germans could influence French doctrine, again displaying political strategy on his part. But when Cousin resumed his chair in 1828 there was no hesitation to praise Schelling's philosophy of nature and indicate how important he was for France. Cousin believed that France would gain immeasurably by aligning herself with Schelling's ideas. By the same token, Germany would also profit, in turn, by studying eclecticism herself. Cousin, nonetheless, insisted that eclecticism was borrowed from no one; that it was born spontaneously by observing conflicts and hidden harmonies in the three great schools of thought of the eighteenth-century.

For Cousin eclecticism was a doctrine "toute française".⁷⁰

Cousin's work remains a patch-work lacking depth and substance. One can say that his ideas came from nowhere and everywhere sutured with invisible threads.⁷¹ Cousin was always accused of anti-Catholicism because he defended the teaching of philosophy in the university as well as defending other liberal matters such as free speech, free press and freedom of worship. The freedom of worship meant the dis-establishment of the Church while freedom of the press and of speech was denounced by the Pope in the encyclical Mirari Vos (1832).

For the Catholics the teaching of philosophy meant irreligion, atheism, and pantheism. Certainly to a Catholic theologian like Bautain eclecticism could not possibly be an eternal truth. Unless philosophy was the handmaiden of theology it was its enemy. Catholicism could not concede autonomy to philosophy. Cousin, in typical fashion answered that "the University is in no way the Church's enemy; it is her friend, it is her ally; but after all, it is not the Church".⁷² The Catholics, to be sure, did not want the University to engage itself with the Church if it was not the Church. If the University is to sanction the philosophical teaching of Church doctrine then the University is the Church. The real problem that was avoided by Cousin was the question of where moral and religious instruction belonged.

As usual, Cousin attempted a compromise. The Law of

June 28, 1833 cited a book on moral and religious instruction for Catholic primary schools, normal schools and examining committees that could be used in case moral and religious instruction should be given to pupils. This book in question was Livre d'instruction morale et religieuse à l'usage des écoles primaires catholiques, élémentaires et supérieures, des écoles normales et des commissions d'examen (2ieme ed., Paris, 1834).⁷⁴ The author is listed as Victor Cousin in the author catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The book contained a series of excerpts from the Old and New Testament followed by a catechism. Nevertheless the parents of the children were to have the power of deciding whether their children were to participate in these lessons or not. Cousin's decision to have religious instructions in the schools were formed during his tour of inspection of the schools in Germany.⁷⁵ It is important to take note that Cousin believed that it was imperative to have an understanding with the clergy with regards to the instruction of the people. Cousin insisted that philosophy is beyond reproach, that it recognizes that a well-educated Christian is necessary and that religion is a indestructible power. Accordingly, there are certain religious ideas which are universal. The performance of ritual, the direction of worship belong to the clergy, but it was felt that morals and religious history belonged to the laity as well as the clergy. Cousin's desire for a philosophical renaissance in

the interest of French civilization was met with resistance from the clergy who had quarrels with philosophy. As late as 1863 when Cousin's philosophy was preached in the classrooms he urged his friend Bersot to show the world that there is room between Veuillot and Littré.⁷⁵

Unlike what occurred in Germany, England, and Italy, there has never been formed an Hegelian school in France. Hegel never possessed a great disciple such as Schelling had in Ravaissou. While neo-Hegelianism played an important role in the history of philosophy in Italy and England, it had only one representative in France, Octave Hamelin. It has been said that one reason why Hegel never caught on in France is because there is no technical term in his philosophy that has its exact equivalent in the French language.⁷⁶ Hegel's philosophy is so individual that its terminology is not found in France.⁷⁷ Near the 1860's the works of Hegel in France (not necessarily the most important) were basically the translations of the Italian A. Vera.⁷⁸ In addition, it can also be said that the non-existence of neo-Hegelianism in France was due to the 'back to Kant' movement that occurred in France long before it occurred in Germany. The generation that came after Renouvier and Cournot, namely that of Lachelier and Boutroux replaced the eclectics and were conscious of renewing an old tradition in French philosophy, the Cartesian tradition and creating a rapprochement with scientific thinking, namely, mathematical thought.⁷⁹ that

generation ignored Hegel. In their eyes the anti-mathematical Hegel was a heresy. What irked them was Hegel's pretention of creating a new science by way of a philosophy of nature.

Hegel's philosophy of history was not acceptable to the new historical school of Fustel de Coulanges.⁸⁰ What was perhaps even more decisive was that the Protestant Hegel could not solve the problem of religion in a country that was basically Catholic. Hegel's philosophy was accused of atheism, immoralism, fatalism, pantheism etc....⁸¹

Nonetheless Hegel did play an important role in the 'spiritualist' history of nineteenth-century France.

It may be ironic that Hegelianism had its debut in France in 1828 when Cousin recovered his chair at the Sorbonne. In fact, Cousin's L'Introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie is superficially Hegelian throughout, without even mentioning Hegel! But the generation of Vacherot, Renan, and Taine would later try to retrace the thread that led to Hegel. Taine, in the Journal des Débats, 1860, (reproduced in Histoire de la littérature anglaise, tome V, 11, 1, 12^e ed., 1911) wrote that "de 1780 à 1830 l'Allemagne a produit toutes les idées de notre âge historique et, pendant un demi-siècle encore, pendant un siècle peut-être notre grande affaire sera de les repenser".⁸² On could very well say that at that time Hegel was in the air but not in French soil. One could not really talk of Taine's Hegelianism, or Renan's Hegelianism for that

matter; Cousin knew Hegel from secondary sources although he had met him but could not consider himself in any way Hegelian. Yet interest in Hegel continued in the second half of the nineteenth-century. But soon the interest, from his metaphysics to his political thought and his philosophy of right. But the resurgence of Hegel occurred through the influence of Boutroux and others such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Victor Delbos, Charles Andler, and Xavier Léon.⁵⁵

To return to 1833, the Eclecticism of Cousin was clearly then all the rage. Only Saint-Simon's new Christianity was a serious rival. Catholics did not feel obligated to defend spiritualism against materialism or theism against atheism; this was the Golden Age of Romanticism. Their only concern was to defend Catholic Christianity as the highest type of religion.⁵⁶ It was the period when everyone brooded over the problem of destiny. The *mal de siècle* was a yearning for the Infinite, the Absolute.⁵⁷ It was the time to raise important questions: Where is the truth to be found? Is it to be found in Christianity or revealed in all religions and philosophies? Was Christianity final or would it pass on to another form?⁵⁸ The Catholic clergy did nothing to satisfy this religious hunger. Discourse on religion was something foreign. In seminaries philosophy was discussed in the Scholastic Latin and the theological method was Cartesian. Nothing had changed since Bossuet. Although religious

periodicals (Annales de philosophie chrétienne, 1830; Revue Européenne, 1831) renewed some interest in intellectual matters, what dominated the scene was the traditional hypothesis of a primitive revelation. The whole apologetic enterprise was dominated by the historical approach on the one hand and by the common sense philosophy of Lamennais on the other hand.⁶⁷ Lamennais argued against the view that society and morality are not linked to religious belief. This indifferentism consisted of three kinds: the atheist, the deist, and the Protestant. All rest their cases on the position of individualism. Lamennais counteracted with the philosophy of 'common sense', that is, the view that religion rests, not with the individual, but with tradition, mankind, and society. Therein lies the fabric of religion. This was far away from the apologetics of the will, that is, an apologetics from 'within' the subject. The will for Lamennais could only be a social will. This could perhaps curb the aftermath of the Revolution but it could not meet the challenge of German philosophical thought.

Catholic Apologetics

Louis Bautain and the Apologetics of the Will

Eclecticism presented a problem to Catholic thought. It was problematic because the theological seminaries still taught the Cartesian method of theology. It was not prepared

to bring it into line with the kind of philosophical thinking that was presented in the form of Eclecticism. Catholic apologetics had to turn away from the historical approach and meet the challenge presented by German Idealism. It became necessary that Catholic thought break away from Cartesianism. Catholic thought in matters of epistemology and metaphysics had reached a dead end. German thought had rattled the faith and had awakened Catholicism out of a long sleep. Who could work out a Catholic system that could take up the challenge that Eclecticism blundered? Integralism was what was needed. However what this thesis is proposing is that Kantian thought was problematic on two counts: His Critique of Practical Reason drew attention to the will and an autonomous grounding of morality but by the same token he was offensive to the Catholic mind because the Critique of Pure Reason denigrated the power of reason that had heretofore provided the epistemological foundation for Catholic faith. Such a position if taken serious had to be assimilated and integrated into Catholic thought to bring it in line with modern philosophical thought. By now, however, Ballanche, de Bonald, de Maistre, and Chateaubriand were old men; in fact, not one of them had a proper grounding in philosophy any way. Lamennais, of course, had fallen out of favor with the Church and was secluded at La Chevrie working on his pantheistic Esquisse d'une philosophie. Catholic intellectual life was bleak and non-existent. But in 1833 there erupted from

Strasbourg a new thinker Abbé Louis Bautain with a short work entitled De l'enseignement de la philosophie en France au XIXième siècle (Strasbourg, Fevrier: Paris, Derivaux, 1833, pp. 91.) in which the basic philosophical tendencies of the century were analyzed and criticized in a trenchant manner. This was quite unexpected from a Catholic priest. In this work the school of Condillac, the Scottish school, and the Eclectic school were all strongly criticized. Here Bautain also criticized the thought of Lamennais and the dry scholasticism of the seminaries. In place of these schools of thought Bautain proposed to work out a new Christian philosophy.==

Bautain saw that the old apologetics that had been used against the eighteenth-century materialists and atheists could no longer work because he saw that the youths of 1834 were not atheists nor theists nor deists. This was what Lamennais had thought. The danger that Bautain saw lurking was the idealistic pantheists, the eclectics of the German style, who believe in a God who lives in Nature and who also believe in man who posits them both by his development and his manifestations. Bautain saw the eclectics as being excessively spiritualistic in speculation, almost doubting the existence of matter. He saw them granting immortality to the soul to the extent of confusing it with eternity. He saw them insisting on the necessity of revelation but it was a revelation seen everywhere. He also saw them insisting on

free-will although it is not autonomous in their eyes.

Furthermore, he detected in them a belief in the incarnation that really had nothing to do with the Christian Incarnation because they affirmed that the life of man and of the world is one continuous incarnation of the divinity.⁸⁷

The conclusion was that the French youth, enchanted with Romanticism and Eclecticism, did not reject religion but rather embraced all religions. Bautain was now seen as the Catholic capable of creating a new Summa. Here, then, was a youth to whom was offered a chair at the Faculty at the Sorbonne by Victor Cousin which he refused and who impressed many students with a series of addresses at the Eglise Saint Roch. Yet there was a glimmer of romance about him - certainly he was learned and had three doctorates (letters, 1816; theology, 1835; medicine, 1826). Hegel had stated that he was a better systematic thinker than Cousin.⁸⁸ Thus Bautain believed that it was his task to replace the scholastic philosophy from the French seminaries with his own philosophy.⁸⁹

Bautain's philosophical tendencies are apparent when one looks in his thesis for the degree of "Agrège en philosophie" which he defended in 1816. The work was entitled De idealismo et phaenomenismo, in eo quod pertinet ad existentiam substantiae spiritualis. It is in this work that Bautain shows that the Lockian and Kantian epistemologies lead to skepticism not only of the external world but the existence of the self as well. Bautain also maintained that there is no escape from this skepticism except through some doctrine of common sense knowledge; intuition or "faith" as taught in Scotland by Reid and Stewart and in Germany by Merian and Ancillon. It can be said that Bautain's thesis is an elaborate review of English philosophy and German philosophy from Kant through Fichte and Schelling and the Berlin academics concerning the problem of the existence of the self. This was the work of a twenty year old scholar! This readily shows how much the Scottish realism of Reid and Stewart had penetrated the Ecole Normale. This Scottish philosophy would later be distributed throughout France by Royer-Collard. Upon his return from Germany, where he was introduced to Hegel by Cousin, Bautain's enthusiasm for philosophy increased even more after his contact with German philosophy in the flesh. At that point he seriously took up post-Kantian idealism. In fact Fichte's works fascinated him as they turned his attention to ethical and political questions. Immediately

upon his return he gave a course in "morale transcendante" based on Fichte's Sittenlehre. At this time Bautain lifted the notion of will upon a pedestal. He became an apostle of the will, seeing the will as being the source of all dignity and morality. Pure liberty became for Bautain the goal of all human life. The will was seen as the pivot of ethics. It is also interesting to note that this was the time when Bautain's attitude towards the Church was that of alienation. As Horton puts it,

... now that German Idealism had removed his agnosticism by teaching him to see in the reason a transcendental faculty, capable of piercing to the core of all life's ultimate mysteries, he definitely turned his back on the Church, cast away religious faith as a useless crutch, and, rejoicing with all the exuberance of youth in his new-found freedom, set out to solve the riddle of the universe alone.⁹⁶

But the Promethean stage was cut short. During a lecture on "Transcendental Ethics" in March 1819, Bautain suffered a nervous collapse. Several months later he resumed his lectures only to collapse again. The pretension to autonomy, independence and freedom suffered a mighty blow to the ego. The nervous collapse signaled for Bautain a need for a new life, one which was not to be based on philosophy. He was now confronted with the limits of the will, the limits of freedom and the limits of autonomy.⁹⁷ Then during the summer of 1820 Bautain met a sympathetic Louise Humann, sister of George Humann and the niece of the celebrated Mgr. Colmar, Archbishop of Mayence. She was cultivated in every science from philosophy to chemistry and had studied German

philosophy.⁹⁹ She was a sort of Alsatian Madame de Stael. She restored Bautain's health, provided him with intellectual companionship and gave him a new lease on life.

Bautain resumed his teaching by initiating a course on Aesthetics.¹⁰⁰ He was still shaken up and therefore unable to undertake a lecture on Ethics or Metaphysics.

Philosophy had meant the whole of his life but now Bautain thought that philosophy had failed him. Reason had failed him and the autonomy of the will had failed him. Which way was he to turn now? On what solid ground must his being stand? What could give him a foundation for life? During this crucial year he shifted away from Fichte towards the study of Kant. From this point all his subsequent writings take the main results of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason as final and unimpeachable that human reason is incapable of acquiring any valid knowledge of things-in-themselves. This for Bautain implied the rejection of speculative metaphysics, that is, scholastic philosophy with its rational arguments for the existence of God.¹⁰¹ Bautain now realized that if ultimate reality cannot be reached at all by way of reason, then some other faculty must. He also believed that Kant's Critique of Practical Reason was a clumsy and unsuccessful attempt to repair the damage done by the Critique of Pure Reason. But Bautain's internal struggle, with the help of Louise Humann, was resolved, such that now he re-embraced the doctrines of the Catholic faith. What "saved" him was the

reading of Scripture, prayer and confession. These were the "bitter-pills" for his intellectual pride to swallow. But prayer was truly efficacious hence peace and trust returned.¹⁰²

Two years had elapsed between Bautain's first meeting with Louise Humann and his final conversion to the Catholic faith. What Louise Humann did was bring Bautain in contact with the ancient tradition of mysticism. At that time mysticism was blended with theosophic, occultistic and Cabalistic tendencies, mediated by Jacob Boehme's philosophy and touched in a small way with neo-Platonism.¹⁰⁴ In addition to this Louise Humann drew sources from the popular philosophy of the day, that is from Jacobi in Protestant circles and Franz von Baader in Catholic circles. What comes from Jacobi is Bautain's conception of faith as a cognitive faculty and from Baader Bautain derives his conception of the analogy between cognition and biological reproduction.

During the academic year of 1821-22 Bautain chose to teach metaphysics but everyone noticed a radical change. Duty and faith replaced liberty and reason. Protestants sensed a drift towards Catholicism while Catholics were disturbed at Bautain's attacks on Reason. Logic was no longer Bautain's method as he would utter such things as "God does not exist; he is".¹⁰⁵ Bautain's intellectual development was complete. His philosophical system was now conceived and was final. It was "Platonism purified by the light of Christianity".¹⁰⁶

Prior to his conversion Bautain had been self-reliant, independent and believed in the absolute spontaneity of the will. Now he was humble, respected tradition and authority and was conscious of his dependence upon outside powers for guidance and enlightenment. This Catholic attitude was given a foundation as he gathered facts from every realm of nature and the moral life to prove that passivity, receptivity, submissiveness, dependence and so forth are the necessary conditions for normal growth and development and for attaining limited freedom, spontaneity and intelligence within reach of man. Accepting the Kantian verdict, Bautain maintained that the knowledge of God is unattainable by reason. But how is it attainable? Bautain's reply was that it is attainable by self-mortification, faith and insight. What is significant here is that Catholicism is linked with Kantianism. Bautain's Catholicism was supported, not by reason but by the practical will. His practice of Catholicism did not square with the intellectual side of Catholicism. Catholicism and Kantianism are in disagreement with each other over issues of the powers of reason. Bautain had to shunt aside the rational side of Catholicism in order to embrace the epistemological side of Kant.

The fruitful period of Bautain's life was the founding of the Strasbourg school and the growing popularity of the Strasbourg philosophy, beginning in 1822 and ending in 1834 with the Bishop's Avertissement condemning his

philosophy. Bautain's magnum opus was never completed.

What he wanted to do was to correct and complete the Kantian critique of reason by making a psychological study of the role of reason within the human faculties and thus pointing towards a theory of religious knowledge not grounded on rational "postulates" but rather on moral and religious experience. For this Bautain accepts two basic results from Kant. First, that reason cannot prove its own axioms, principles and laws. Secondly, that these rational laws, categories, accepted on trust if they are to work at all, are inapplicable in the sphere of metaphysics and theology.¹⁰⁸

He supports the first opinion by pointing to the Kantian forms of the understanding and for the second opinion he points to the Kantian antinomies as conclusive proofs of the metaphysical impotence of reason. However, Bautain is adamant about insisting that it is on the psychological side that the Kantian critique needs correction. He maintains that a good psychologist would not make the same errors as Kant.¹¹⁰

What he refers to is the distinction that Kant makes between theoretical reason and practical reason. The worst part of it all is, according to Bautain, that Kant made reason man's highest faculty, his sole cognitive faculty.¹¹¹ Bautain insists that man is sensitive, volitional and intelligent before he is reasonable or engaged in reasoning. He concludes that the Kantian critique has only determined the powers of reason, not its nature or rank in the spiritual organization

of man.¹¹²

The way that Bautain answers Kant is with a genetic psychology of the knowing process whereby he stresses the priority of the will over the intellect. Bautain insists that prior to mind there is the will or the soul. In fact, experience is prior to the specific function of cognition. He maintains that the foetus does not know yet it experiences: it feels, but it is not conscious of the sensations that it experiences.¹¹³ According to Locke experience is a purely passive and intellectual process while for Fichte experience is a purely active and ethical process but Bautain takes the middle course between these two thinkers by stating quite simply that experience is partly passive and partly active.¹¹⁴ The consciousness of individuality grows with the consciousness of need while personality comes only with the beginning of language. The self of the child is awakened by the opposition of another self which makes itself known and felt to the child by speech and actions.¹¹⁵ It is speech which makes thought possible. Language and feelings are prior to reasoning. According to Bautain it is when one has reached self-consciousness that one can master thinking and reflection upon thinking all of which require a fair degree of concentration and attention which is in turn dependent on the developed will. This emergence of self-consciousness makes possible the act of judgement. When the power to judge manifests itself it may be said that

reason has dawned. For Bautain judgement is the simplest act of the reason but reasoning is impossible without a highly developed language.¹¹⁰

We see how much Bautain is in agreement with Fichte in maintaining that experience is vital and practical and that the cognitive aspect is secondary. In the first instance its content consists of actions and reactions which later, or in a second instant, consists of "ideas". According to Bautain's viewpoint, experience is an unconscious outward motion of the spirit toward the stimulating objects and only reflection upon experience is the beginning of knowledge.¹¹¹ According to Bautain it is the objective world, the environment, that takes the initiative in the formation of knowledge. The first mental reaction of the vital principle in the child to the stimulus of the environment is the act of attention. This is a step removed from the blind and instinctive reaction that occurs everywhere in the organic and inorganic realms. Attention does not appear until, with the development of self-consciousness in the child, the stage of moral liberty and personality succeeds to that of physical liberty and individuality.¹¹² In man, reason tends to reduce organisms to mechanical activity but man is able to know things as organic, living and intelligent. Man discerns a spiritual world behind the appearances of the natural order. This therefore implies a higher faculty than reason, namely,

intelligence. In the earlier stages of a child's development intelligence is not differentiated. The child is a little animal for whom the material world seems more material than spiritual. He knows about the spiritual realm only from what the elders tell him in the course of his moral and religious instructions. Intelligence appears to him as faith. This intelligence develops as the child's "world" expands. This intelligence may develop from a simple attachment or a need for a simple object of affection to a lifelong quest for "the Supreme Beauty". The child wants to know why and becomes more and more dissatisfied with superficial answers and the love of truth becomes an insatiable thirst for the ultimate explanation. This desire is pushed to the infinite and is never satisfied unless it perceives in each question, in each science, the relation of the infinite to the finite and the bond that unites them. Thus the "quest" has its roots in the intelligence. But for Bautain there is still a higher knowledge than intelligence: it is the knowledge of the heart. The will, the heart, the soul, that is what is deepest in man.

We can see that Bautain's anti-intellectualism has, as its roots, a psychological voluntarism. This psychological voluntarism contains the doctrine of the primacy of the will and the instrumental character of the intellect. However, Bautain, not only ranks the will above reason, but he also ranks it above intelligence, faith and tradition.

It would be correct, therefore to classify Bautain as a voluntarist, an intuitionist and a traditionalist.¹²⁴

Bautain implies that intelligence, reason and imagination are three powers of the mind. Imagination is purely physical and as such it conveys knowledge of the physical world. Reason, however, is the border-line between the physical and the spiritual. It is capable of inferring the existence of the spiritual world but it is not capable of describing it.

Intelligence is purely spiritual and communicates immediately with the intelligible world and "divine wisdom". The imagination gives us images, the reason gives us notions and the intelligence gives us ideas. Therefore Bautain maintains that the intelligence grasps truth immediately while the operation of the reason is successive and fractional. Reason is to the intelligence as time is to eternity. Intelligence, therefore, is an "interior vision".¹²⁵

We can notice quite readily the distinction that Bautain makes between intelligence and reason is suggestive of Plotinus' distinction between the eye of the body and the interior eye or St. Augustine's distinction between intelligere and ratiocinari as well as the distinction made by St. Anselm, Gerson, St. Bernard and St. Thomas Aquinas between intellectus and ratio.¹²⁶ But those who believed in the existence of a transcendental intuitive faculty called it "reason" (raison, Vernunft) while they gave it the name of "understanding"

(entendement, Verstand) to Bautain's "reason". This was the form that it took with the Eclectics as well as the fact that it was the form that Coleridge, influenced by Jacobi, popularized in the English-speaking world. Bautain, however, believes that reason and intelligence are logically and psychologically distinguishable. Bautain contrasts two types of logic: the logic of organism or logic of intelligence and the logic of mechanism or logic of reason. In this way "analysis" or the method of nature is contrasted with "synthesis" or artificial reasoning. The reason behind Bautain's logic of organism is his belief that modern descriptive sciences with its mechanistic and atomistic tendencies are inadequate to deal with living organisms. Bautain saw a real need for a kind of logic to deal with organisms. The picture of many billiard-balls forever bumping into one another was a falsification of what was going on in every organism. There was needed a logic whereby each proposition is organically related to the totality.

An issue can be raised at this point concerning the distinction between the "faith" of Bautain (the post-Kantian Vernunft's intuitive grasp of metaphysical reality) and the "faith" of the believing Christian's assent to the world of God's historical revelation. It can be stated that, for Bautain, as a fideist, there is an insistence on the priority of faith. But Bautain never meant fides implicita or blind

faith. When he was contrasting faith with reason he always meant one of three things: 1) willingness to make assumptions, 2) receptivity, 3) dawning perception of truth.¹³⁰ When Bautain meant that faith was the willingness to make assumptions he meant proceeding upon unproven hypotheses, in other words, the axioms that ground rationality are not susceptible to rational proofs. The fundamental principles upon which stands the edifice of science are unproven. In a similar way the experience of the self is an accepted datum of experience. Likewise the existence of God cannot be reasoned. When Bautain equates faith with receptivity it is because knowledge is born of belief and never precedes it. It is acceptance in trust. A person, for example, who insisted on knowing and judging and reasoning before believing would be like a child who insisted on testing his mother's milk everytime before taking it.¹³⁴ When faith is expressed as the dawning perception of truth Bautain means that it is a special "feeling". It is a knowing, a taste for the truth. But the leap of faith is judged by the will. It is a total reaction of the life-principle. Faith determines the will.

As a traditionalist Bautain is problematic because mystics need not be instructed in the tradition, because what they see is a truth of a "timeless vision". Now, Bautain's traditionalism is an outcome, ironically, of his mysticism.¹³⁵ This came out of his Platonic theory of innate

Ideas. Bautain's theory of revelation is basically a theory of inspiration which displays the romantic side of Bautain, because, here there is no sharp dividing-line between the natural inspiration of the poet and the supernatural inspiration of the prophet or seer or apostle. According to Bautain, therefore, ideas are the fundamental principles which reason cannot prove nor disprove. But they are the roots of all science. Reason cannot discover ideas.

Bautain believes that revelation is communicated only to the man of genius and, here he means, the seer, the poet, the prophet, the apostle and so forth. Revelations are given to these personalities because revelation comes from visions, ecstatic moments, automatisms etc... He assigns these states to what he calls Transcendental Psychology. In these moments the man of genius loses his "presence of mind" and there occurs communication between intelligence and supersensible reality. Thus inspiration is characterized by the involuntary, automatic, and unreflected nature of experience. The truth is self-evident when revealed immediately to the man of genius while it is also self-evident when it is accepted faithfully by the common man when the revelation is mediated by tradition. Tradition, communicated by society and received through faith leads to the individual knowledge of first principles such that he will be able to reflect on them. As such society is necessary for moral education. Knowledge is not an

abstraction of ideas from sensible reality but is acquired by reflecting on ideas received through faith from tradition.¹³⁰ This moderate traditionalism would remain as a dominant conception in Catholic theology during the first half of the nineteenth-century.¹³¹

In spite of Bautain's importance as being the first moderate traditionalist to clash with scholasticism on a purely theological issue of "faith and reason", his philosophy soon lost its interest for the educated public. While the clerical world was unsympathetic and the Church authorities openly hostile, Bautain lacked the courage of his earlier convictions and while positivism and scientific materialism began to gain importance Bautain's philosophy slipped into oblivion. But his influence never left philosophical and theological circles. Bernard Reardon writes that

Bautain's type of thinking was to persist among Catholic intellectuals in France until the end of the century and beyond, where it can be traced in Blondel's philosophy of action and the modernism and religious pragmatism of Laberthonniere and Le Roy.¹⁴⁰

In a similar fashion McCool states that,

Bautain's apologetics was an early nineteenth-century version of Augustine's apologetics of the restless heart. Sixty years later that Augustinian apologetics would appear in a late nineteenth-century version in Maurice Blondel's "apologetics of immanence".¹⁴²

Alphonse Gratry and the Apologetics of Dialectics

The heir to Bautain was his own pupil, Alphonse

Gratry.¹⁴⁴ We can say that Gratry was another attempt to create a new Christian metaphysics in reaction to the school of Lamennais in a way that it understands the intelligence as being autonomous in spite of the claims of revelation.¹⁴⁵ However, this autonomous intelligence also contained elements of voluntarism and mysticism. Reardon maintains that this anticipated "the type of Catholic thinking to emerge in the closing decades of the century with the work of Ollé-Laprune and Blondel."¹⁴⁶ Gratry's goal was to reconcile the conflicting tendencies in Catholic philosophy that had arisen up to then and in addition to this, find some ground or foundation in common with Cousin's eclecticism.¹⁴⁷

In his youth, as it is recounted in his *Souvenirs de jeunesse*, his autobiography, Gratry underwent a conversion experience whereby he experienced a sense of the futility of life and in his response, promised to consecrate his life to God if only God could explain to him the mystery of life.¹⁴⁸ Immediately, Gratry asked himself the question concerning the problem of human destiny.¹⁴⁹ He posed the problem in order to be able to orient his life.¹⁵⁰ Jouffroy had done the same thing previously but his intention was more philosophical and abstract. Gratry's method was more like that of a believer and that of an apostle.¹⁵¹

In 1828 Gratry had moved to Strasbourg to study under Bautain but was unable to accept Bautain's fideism wholeheartedly nor could his original creative spirit permit

him to become anyone's disciple. He broke off from Bautain in 1840 and later at the Ecole Normale, when working as a chaplain where he was very influential, he came in conflict with Etienne Vacherot the Ecole's director. Gratry eventually resigned.¹²⁰ He really wanted to write a Christian apology in a way that would reconcile religion and modern science on the one hand and solve the problem of daily life caused by the emergence of industrialization. Gratry did not see Christianity as an escape from modern science and philosophy. He saw Christianity as the real spiritual dynamic behind all intellectual progress.¹²¹ According to Gratry, science can progress morally only if it is based on a religious foundation. It can only reach its goal by first possessing a sense of the infinite and the knowledge of the divine purpose.¹²² Gratry's system can be found in three works: La Connaissance de Dieu (1853); Logique (1855); La Connaissance de l'Ame (1858). The basic themes in these works are theodicy, psychology, logic and ethics. According to Gratry knowledge of God is the starting point of the whole metaphysical enterprise.¹²³ God's existence must be demonstrated before anything else. Unfortunately, the age in which he lived had lost confidence in reason. Gratry saw that the deductive method, where the conclusion was already latent in the premises, had failed. The method had to be replaced by a new one, namely the inductive or the "dialectic".¹²⁴ This method would use the "known" in order to get to the

"unknown", the only method to cross over the abyss that separates the relative from the absolute.¹⁵⁵

In La Connaissance de Dieu, Gratry argues against those who had exaggerated the weakness of reason to the point of maintaining that it is impotent in establishing the existence of God. It is Gratry's belief that there is a knowledge of God that is both intuitive and rational. Descartes, he maintains, was wrong in turning the Cogito into an absolute. Gratry answers that thought cannot be separated from being. In fact, he maintains that being is prior to thought and is its very foundation.¹⁵⁶

It is Gratry's position that philosophy is the study of wisdom, whose object is the real and the good. Here Gratry maintains that all the great thinkers of the past, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and St. Thomas, are all unanimous in supporting the existence of God. Gratry sees the solitary thinker as one who insists on the practical side of the proof of the existence of God, namely, on moral resource, the Pascalien method. Gratry points to the fact that the everyday activity of the soul is the movement from the finite to the infinite. It is an aspiration from a recognized limitation to an infinite possibility. This is different from that of deduction which moves within the circle of the "known", or from "like to like". Induction moves from particular facts and experience to that which is beyond. Therefore, as he applied induction to metaphysical problems,

Gratry believed that he was tracing a new path and he identified the "dialectical method" with the principle of the infinitesimal calculus showing that in mathematics the concept of the infinite, while it corresponds to no genuine reality, is not simply a matter of human thinking. It is a manifestation of the divine reason itself.¹²⁷ The infinite is reached because the finite is stripped away by the dialectic. This romantic feeling for the divine is characteristic of Gratry's entire outlook. As Reardon puts it, the basic point of Gratry's method is that "the Christian believer becomes aware of the inward solicitation of divine grace".¹²⁸ The mind is directed to finite things, therefore, it needs some higher impulse to elevate it to some higher spiritual plane. The response is nothing less than a conversion. But this conversion is both intellectual and moral.

Next, Gratry takes on Hegel as a foe. Gratry sees Hegelianism as being contrary to the principle constituents of reason: the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction, the former being the foundation of deduction while the latter is the principle of transcendence, the foundation of induction.¹²⁹ According to Gratry Hegel was obliged to deny one of these principles and to apply the other in an inverse manner. Gratry insists that Hegel's system of pantheism (or as he sees it, atheism) is a proof of the existence of God by absurdity. Gratry sees Hegel

reasoning in the abstract. For example, the negation of the negation seems logical in the abstract world but not in the existing real world. It is for this reason that Gratry believes that in the concrete the yes and the no are not opposed in an absolute manner.¹⁶⁰ Gratry insists that the real dialectic starts from the limited perfections of man and his attributes to God without limits. But Hegel, he is quick to point out, takes away these perfections at the same time as their limitations. He maintains that Hegel is not just happy to pull the universe out of nothing but he has the audacity to explain how it came out.¹⁶¹ Gratry's position is that one cannot put pure being at the origin of things for it is an indeterminate being, empty of attributes identical to non-being. Such a non-being could not have engendered the reality of such a universe. The Less cannot produce the greater, the imperfect the perfect, the non-being the being.¹⁶²

Gratry's criticism of Hegel, in my mind, is typical of the French mind's encounter with the German style. What Gratry is really concerned about is the abstract method of Hegel's dialectic. Gratry's dialectic is more concerned with the everyday concrete, while still remaining rational because this view is also concerned to refute the traditionalism of a Lamennais. Yet Gratry's rationalism, nonetheless, is mixed in with voluntarism as well as some mysticism. Moreover, and this is important, Gratry's rationalism is at the service of

the concrete and not at the service of abstract logic -- God is approached from the dialectics of the concrete not from abstractions.¹⁴³

In La Connaissance de Dieu Gratry metaphorically states that the two wings that elevate the soul to God are the dialectic and love.¹⁴⁴ God is not simply proven by his effects but by his idea, in other words, by the sentiment we have of him within us. Gratry says that Plato and Aristotle have this same understanding when one maintains the idea of the supreme good while the other maintains the love of the supreme intelligence. In addition to this, Gratry points out that Descartes also means the same thing when he sees in the notion of the infinite the mark of the worker on his opus.

Gratry concludes that we have an external sense by which we experience ourselves and the divine sense by which we experience God. But, however, to experience God we need more than just the divine "sense", we have to want to use it in preference to the other senses. This, according to Gratry, is the moral method. To believe in God, one has to will it. When one denies God, the principle of evil is in one's will. This particular will has to make the effort to maintain itself in a normal state because moral degradation leads to a denial of God.¹⁴⁴

Gratry's moral concern divides man's nature into three spheres: the animal, the rational and the spiritual. The last sphere, the spiritual, is a "natural" faculty or

capacity which psychology must be aware of because without the spiritual the lower faculties cannot be properly understood.¹⁰⁵ The soul, says Gratry is primarily spirit and, like God, it comprises a trinity of being, that is, a series of concentric circles, the affective, the intellectual and the volitional.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, the mind must be studied, not only in its bodily relations, but "in its orientation toward the God whom it spontaneously and continuously seeks".¹⁰⁷ Hence, Gratry believes that the goal of the moral life is to transcend the senses and reason and attain the "order of charity". The sacrifice of sensuality to reason and reason to love is possible only by divine grace but the moral effort that is required must be willed by man himself.¹⁰⁸ The problem that Gratry sees is that men fail to carry through with their convictions because they do not know the meaning of "fullness of life". The life these men lead is directed not towards Being but nonbeing, le néant. They feel destined for death with no hope for immortality.¹⁰⁹

CHAPTER II

THE MORAL SUBJECT

Moral Crisis

Positivism

Raymond St.-Jean in Genese de l'Action: Blondel 1882-1893 has pointed out that the main currents of thought which arose out of the nineteenth-century and provoked Blondel to undertake the writing of L'Action (1893) were positivism, idealism and criticism, neo-Christianity, and symbolism.¹ While St.-Jean's work skimmed over the issues quite quickly it is necessary here to give a fuller treatment of the issues and extrapolate as much as possible the vital themes, methods and concerns that gave Blondel a sustained view of both his milieu as well as the fact that French thought in the nineteenth-century had been an inadequate presentation of the dialogue between philosophy and theological concerns in a modern context and, in this particular case that which concerned Blondel the most, between philosophy and Catholic thought and practice.²

Positivism had marked the end of the preoccupation with the theory of knowledge and it opened the way for the philosophy of science.³ What positivism accomplished was

that it prevented scientific enquiry from engaging in epistemological self-reflection. The knowing subject had ceased to be the point of reference. Positivism, created by Comte, had become a method in which only calculation and empiricism were of any value. The age of metaphysics and religion had passed. Positivism did, however, gain prestige because of its rigorous methodology. Positivism insisted on quantitative methods and, therefore, Comte's ethic was not a normative science that concerned itself with determining values and moral rules. Ethics for Comte was social psychology. Positivism would study man's overt behavior with the idea that they would be able to formulate laws of behavior which would allow the scientist to predict and pursue social engineering. Positivism could not help influence philosophy. Between 1885 and 1890 both philosophical positivists Taine and Renan had reached their apogee and eclecticism had died with the final echoes of Caro.

Emile Littré (1801-1881) had accepted Comte's positivism as an epistemological theory but disregarded its religious cult and political flavour. Positivism had replaced his theological beliefs and his rejected metaphysics. What was so attractive about positivism was that it was a total view, like metaphysics, but different in the way that metaphysics developed out of a priori ideas whereas positivism had empiricism as its foundation for

truth.⁷ Positivism, in fact, denies the validity of any means of knowledge that can be classified a priori. Furthermore, positivism denies any possible knowledge concerning religious and metaphysical questions since, by definition, these concerns lie beyond phenomena.⁸ Thus the positivist ideals were geared on an attitude of absolute confidence in the scientific method accompanied by religious and metaphysical skepticism. However, Comte's system of hierarchical sciences also had an historical basis and it excluded all "absolute questions".⁹ Thus Littré saw positivism as giving an account of only what is accessible to human knowledge and was not to be concerned with absolutes or knowledge of "things-in-themselves".¹⁰

Pierre Berthelot (1827-1907) like Comte, believed in the triumph of scientific knowledge over theology and metaphysics. He was a friend of Ernest Renan (1823-1892) who himself had lost faith in the supernatural. According to both of them a clear scientific universe without a divine will became the foundation of their beliefs. Renan believed that knowledge of reality can be had only through observations and verification of empirical hypotheses.¹¹

If God is unseen or is inaccessible to scientific measure, then he cannot exist. Rational proofs were to be put aside because only scientific proofs for the existence of God could be valid. Hence God had to be rejected.¹² Renan's complex nature discloses a man of serious scholarship on the one hand

one hand and that of a dilettante on the other hand, a positivist, one day, and a romanticist the next day. Both reason and the heart had to be satisfied. In spite of the fact that Renan could not shake off the conviction that through moral consciousness and the recognition of ideals, man entered into a sphere that transcended the empirical sciences. In the end, he admitted that matters concerning God were outside the range of positive knowledge. In fact, Renan's God is not out there in some eternal transcendence, but within, immanent in the development itself. Yet through all of this Renan maintained in L'Avenir de la Science (1890) that science would eventually replace religion in the future.¹¹

Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), on the other hand, did not try to account for religion within a positivist framework like Renan. What he tried to do was combine positivist convictions with his inclination to metaphysics.¹² Taine sought knowledge that was certain, yet, he also sought after comprehensive knowledge, that is, a knowledge of the totality. Science, for him, secured knowledge of the world yet he believed that a view of the totality, that is, metaphysics, was a necessary and valid enterprise.¹³ However Taine never developed a metaphysical system.¹⁴

The moral crisis ushered by the emergence of positivism was the loss of freedom and dignity. Positivism

moral sense of worth - man became a determined object of science. In addition to this positivism rendered man's subjectivity irreverent. It never saw the irreducible quality of man that made the enterprise of science possible. Positivism never realized that a science of the subject went hand in hand with a science of objects.

Neo-Criticism and Idealism

Even more serious a moral problem for French Catholic thought than the positivist attitude was that of neo-criticism and Idealism. Antoine Augustin Cournot (1801-1877) believed that it was not appropriate and fruitful that philosophy should pursue a path of its own without reference to the development of science.¹⁷ For Cournot philosophy must be a critique, especially a critique of the sciences. Concerning his main interest in the theory of knowledge, Cournot maintained that Kant had a rigid understanding of science that needed to be corrected by invoking the notion of probability.¹⁸ Therefore the basic problem of scientific knowledge lies in the evaluation of probabilities. Absolutes simply escapes us. We cannot penetrate into the heart of things, that, even in metaphysics knowledge is tentative.¹⁹ These assertions of Cournot did shake the confidence of the positivists Saint-Simon, Comte, Littré, and Taine on the one hand and metaphysicians like Cousin as well as Catholics on the other

metaphysicians like Cousin as well as Catholics on the other hand.²⁰

Charles Renouvier (1815-1903), a student of Jules Lequier agreed with the strict positivist theory of knowledge but rejected Kant's thing-in-itself.²¹

According to Renouvier we only know phenomena. Renouvier emphasized the relativity of knowledge, arguing that we are never passive in the act of knowing. In this way, all certainty is based on an act of the will to choose.²²

Renouvier believed that each human personality had an independent reality and that the world was a pluralistic one.²³

What Renouvier meant by the term neo-criticism was simply the ambition to continue Kant by rescuing the critical spirit in all its purity by abandoning the kantian system which was outdated because it was still tied, in spite of Kant's efforts, to dogmas of ancient metaphysics.²⁴ Renouvier's interpretation of Kant was governed by three influences that intruded into his thinking: the positivism of Comte, the subjective idealism of Hegel and the fideism of Lequier.²⁵ But Renouvier refuted the possibility of a "science of ethics" based on Kant's categorical imperative. He maintained that our supreme duty is to persons and towards the fulfillment of the human personality. For this he argues against the views of Comte, Hegel, catholic orthodoxy, pantheism and any other

creed that exploits humans as means to an end.²⁴

The entire edifice of neo-criticism rests on Renouvier's theory of knowledge which comprises of two main parts that are distinct yet they interpenetrate each other. The first part is the critique of representation which determines the boundaries of possible consciousness while the second consists of a critique of certitude whereby Renouvier frees its most general laws and organizes them systematically.²⁵ The first step in the critique of representation is to posit phenomena such that what is given in a primordial form to philosophical reflection are the representations, that is, the representative and the represented, the subjective and the objective correlates. Ultimately representations imply only their own elements. Therefore what can be known is only phenomena and hence, Kant's thing-in-itself is eliminated as well as any notion of "substance" which for Renouvier is an idol of philosophy. Therefore philosophy must be positive.²⁶

Inasmuch as phenomena consists of elements of the real and that of knowledge in a joint manner, they nevertheless constitute things that are in relation to one another. This notion of relativeness is the second step in the critique of representations. There is a double thesis in Renouvier's view: on the one hand to know is to pose relations while on the other hand being or existence is reduced to relations. Therefore nothing can be "substance".

Every phenomena is posed as a relation to some other phenomenon. The conclusion seems radical because it insists on nothing other than the rejection of the Absolute, another idol because we cannot know a being posited outside of any relation. Hence metaphysics must be condemned.

With regards to the critique of certitude Renouvier undertakes a rational psychology whereby we find a concern with the will which provides us with the problem of freedom and that of certitude. Renouvier maintains that the phenomenon of willing is not simply spontaneity for that is a category common to all vital functions. Nor, however, is it an absolute spontaneity because all acts of willing are conditioned by their antecedents and nor is it a faculty distinct from representations otherwise it would be a sort of unknowable "substance". What, therefore, is the will? Renouvier defined it as "l'automotivité de la représentation", which means in Hamelin's words "la souveraineté de la représentation sur elle-même" or as "causalité immanente de la représentation". One can also say that it is an effort of the representation.

The result of Renouvier's analysis of the will is clear. It is identical to freedom, that in the exercise of willing there is the accompaniment of the feeling of freedom. If man must therefore affirm freely his freedom what happens to our certitudes? All certitude is a belief because in it there enters intellectual and emotional

factors, but more important, there must be the factor of the voluntary because we can never affirm anything unless we will to do so. Free will operates in such a way that it is the foundation of certainty and morality.²² The belief in fatalism was an aversion to Renouvier.²³ Therefore we can see that neo-criticism was a rejection of the system, as well as the refusal to accept all-inclusive abstractions. It insisted on the limits of human knowledge and rejected any claim to metaphysical certainty made by Hegel and Cousin, or scientific certainty made by the scientific community as well as theological certainty asserted by Catholicism.²⁴ Neo-criticism further claimed that fatalism, materialism, pantheism, evolutionism, cults of history, the Absolute, and Science can have no higher status than any other metaphysical speculation.

Spiritualism

The line of thinking that runs from Maine de Biran to Blondel passes through that of Gaspard Felix Ravaissin-Mollien (1813-1900), who was actually heir to Maine de Biran and within the French "spiritualist" tradition, can be linked to Blondel.²⁵ Ravaissin's famous work De l'Habitude (1838), his doctoral thesis, was the work that initiated the movement called "un réalisme ou positivisme spiritualiste".²⁶

The central position of Ravaissin is that habits,

although at first are voluntary movements, become over the course of time transformed into instinctive movements. As such, conscious voluntary activity, the spontaneous activity of life, gives in to its material conditions, and becomes mechanized, which by doing so, provides a foundation for further voluntary activities of the will. However, for Ravaissou, habit remains an intelligent act, although its activity is unconscious. Habit, therefore, is "une idee substantielle".²⁰ Thus, for Ravaissou, Nature is not a blind and mechanical activity or power. Instead Nature is a desire which immediately perceives its object. In this way Ravaissou sees the world as both a condition of permanence and stability as well as a condition of change. Another way of saying this is by stating that the world is a condition of both necessity/mechanism and spontaneous activity. Habit, therefore, is the interaction between both spheres. Habit arises from spontaneity and when that activity becomes mechanical, it provides a foundation for further spontaneous activity.²¹ It can be said that when spontaneity has become mechanized into habit, intelligence appears to have gone to sleep or has entered the unconscious state.²²

Ravaissou provides us with a view that there is an upward movement of life that is constantly in motion and that there is an infinite gap or infinity of degrees between the lowest limit of Nature and the upper freedom of Spirit. With Bergson one can see that mechanical activity is the

"fossilized residue of a spiritual activity".⁴³ Bergson saw in Ravaissou the anticipation of his elan vital and of Nature as obscured consciousness or dormant volition.⁴⁴

The upward swing of Nature towards Spirit is important when taken in terms of moral activity. Ravaissou believed that to be a philosopher one had to be Aristotelian because it was Aristotle himself who first had the idea that nature is explained by the tendency towards the best of perfection. Nature is a ladder of perfection whereby vegetables desire towards the animal state, animals aim for the human and man desires to be gods. Between the pure Act and pure Matter there is an infinity of being. From this view Ravaissou wanted that understanding of aspiration to be felt to exist in all beings aiming towards order, harmony, and the good.⁴⁵ Habit was the intermediary term that could be inserted between freedom and nature as a state of activity whereby freedom could become nature and nature could become free. Hence Ravaissou was able to explain in this way the relation between spirit and nature, the problem he inherited by attending lectures by Schelling in Munich.⁴⁶

With his work-De L'Habitude Ravaissou was able to pose a central problem for subsequent philosophy in France, namely the problem of action by which the human spirit takes consciousness of himself.⁴⁷ Ravaissou is important because he was convincing in pointing out that it is wrong to explain phenomena by reducing it to their basic elementary

parts although as a method it may be legitimate in science. To be sure, mental activity can't be reduced to physico-chemical processes or impressions. Mental activity or spiritual phenomena has to be viewed in terms of their finality, that is, in terms of their goal-oriented movement of their destinies, of their life, both at the mechanical infraconscious level and at the conscious level."

It cannot be denied that Ravaisson greatly influenced Jules Lachelier (1822-1918) whose own thesis Le fondement de l'induction (1871) was an inquiry into the necessary conditions of our experience in the world." It is important to note that it was Lachelier who introduced to French philosophy the notion of the method of reflection."

Lachelier had not been happy with empirical associationism which leads to skepticism nor was he satisfied with eclecticism which during his day was the ruling position at the University. Lachelier defines induction as "the operation by which we pass from the knowledge of facts to that of the laws which govern them". Although it is standard thinking in science Lachelier believed that it presented a problem. Although experience presents us with observed cases we do not know with certainty that the connections between events must be so. During inductive reasoning we tend to draw universal conclusions with regards to unobserved connections. We

believe in the reign of Necessity in Nature. Lachellier wonders whether this confidence can be theoretically justified.²² According to Lachellier that which provides grounds for induction or for the order of nature are the principles anterior to experience. Hence induction displays how reason precedes experience.²³ Lachellier maintains that the possibility of induction rests on the double principle of efficient causes and of final causes. In other words, the existence of the preceding element determines that which follows (efficient cause) yet the whole determines the existence of the parts (final cause).²⁴ Thus the first fundamental principle of reason is the principle of efficient causality or also called the principle of mechanism by virtue of the fact that phenomena consists of a series by which the first element or event precedes and therefore causes what comes after. But this principle does not suffice to explain the order of nature and it is Lachellier's merit to provide the other principle, that of finality, to explain that movement of spontaneity which leads to a goal.²⁵ However the principles of efficient causality and final causes are not a priori in a subjective manner but they do govern thought and the object of thought.²⁶

Lachellier maintains that the "reason" of the whole complex phenomenon is found in itself, that is, in an immanent final cause which governs the behavior of the

parts.⁵⁷ Every phenomenon is a force that expresses, a spontaneous tendency toward an end and final causality does not replace mechanical causality but rather forms the basis for its occurrence. There is a shift of viewpoint when the idea of final causality subordinates efficient causality to itself. What happens is that "materialist idealism" is transformed into a "spiritual realism" whereby every being is a force and every force a thought which tends more and more towards complete consciousness of itself. Lachelier sees the universe as a single history of thought and events that are continuously being transformed into itself. It is through us and in us that being affirms its proper truth. Ultimately, thought is not a simple datum of consciousness but bears the guarantee of its truth in itself.

The importance of Ravaisson and Lachelier was to give French philosophy a spiritualist realism that found its way into Blondel philosophy of action. It provided French philosophy with a view of Nature as being an aspiration towards Spirit which is best expressed in human volition explained in terms of habit as an intermediary activity between the freedom of spontaneity and the determinism of mechanical activity. Such a view would culminate in Emile Boutroux's philosophy of science, where the romantic understanding of nature merges with the field of science and would provide Blondel with greater scope by which his breadth of vision would greatly profit.

Pessimism

The end of the nineteenth-century was very noticeably saturated with the mood of pessimism.⁶⁰ This pessimism, which permeated especially the literary circles during the years 1890-1900, had its doctrinal foundations in the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer whose famous work Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung had begun to be known in France (by those other than specialists) after 1880.⁶¹ Schopenhauer maintained that misfortune in life far outweighed any happiness that man is capable of achieving and this can be attributed to the will that arouses hope disproportionate to real possibilities.⁶² Therefore Schopenhauer's remedy of salvation consisted of renouncing all desires in this world.⁶³ While Schopenhauer called for an escape into art, Eduard von Hartmann's moral position consisted in renouncing the world in its totality by a voluntary extinction of the human species.⁶⁴ To be sure, Schopenhauer provided the literary community with the philosophical foundation for a deep-felt melancholy and down-cast pessimism.⁶⁵ The effects of pessimism were boredom, melancholy, disillusion, and discouragement.⁶⁶

To counter this tide of pessimism decadent writers also expressed its ties with that philosophy described as idealism. This position is characterized as the contempt for the world of appearances and the attitude is one where nothing "out there" is real.⁶⁷ The result of this is to

turn inward toward the inner world of the subject.¹⁰ From this shift of orientation there is linked the belief that matter is a temporary emanation of the mind and, therefore, what is real is only the mind. This coincided with the belief that it is impossible to have true knowledge of the outside world. This idealism, or absolute solipsism led to total despair.

This idealism also led to the belief in the existence of a "universe of ideas: a world of abstract relations of which the perceptible world is no more than the approximate projection and symbol".¹¹ This, of course, would allow the artist to communicate spiritual essences with words and language. Therefore the result became that the concrete universe gave way to a universe of pure ideas.¹²

The attitude of unbelief and indifference also at this time existed with regards to the dogmas and institutions of the Roman Church. There was no longer anything to have faith in. Christian dogmas were seen in the same light as myth and beliefs of other religions. This signaled a crisis of faith while the whole temperament of the times expressed an ongoing moral crisis within the French culture.¹³ Jean Pierrot's succinct comment on the era states that

... the decadent era, coincided ... with the appearance of a new profound trend, a tendency to reject the very things that, in the previous period, had accelerated this disillusion with religion, which is to

say positivism and the scientific spirit. The resurgence of idealism was an attempt to escape from that vision of the world which held the human being prisoner in a network of implacable laws, which reduced existence to its psychological data, which limited reality strictly to the knowable, the visible, the palpable. Suddenly people were rediscovering the values of sensibility, confronting purely determinist conceptions of consciousness with the notion of the soul which traditionally had always contained religious connotations. The idealist stance, which on the metaphysical plane led to subjectivism and the loneliness of a self confronted with a world made up solely of changing appearances and on the emotional plane to indulgence in a narcissistic rejection of life or an increased desire to escape from it, also manifested itself in a kind of diffuse religious sensibility. Faith had gone, artists seem to be saying, yet we cannot be satisfied with a universe reduced solely to the interplay of purely material and physical forces. Faced with the sterility of the positivist world, they proclaimed their belief in a supernatural universe, even though that belief remained rather vague and imprecise, largely because the intransigence of the Roman Church at first made any return to the relative certainty of traditional dogmas impossible. This is why the last two decades of the century saw the emergence of a whole gamut of trends that often, from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy, are merely deviant products of a religious sensibility that is drawn toward the supernatural while remaining incapable of finding any solution to its needs in any of the already-existing religions.⁷²

Immediate Mentors

Emile Boutroux and the Crisis of Freedom

In 1874, a former pupil of Lachelier, Emile Boutroux (1845-1921), came out with a doctorate thesis entitled De la contingence des lois de la nature which was a new analysis in France of the implications of Kant's philosophy for science and the thesis was lauded in Paris as one of major importance.⁷³

It has been suggested that Boutroux's source for his inspiration came, when as an undergraduate, studying at the University of Heidelberg, from the historian Heinrich Treitschke (1834-1896), the historian of philosophy, Eduard Zeller (1814-1908), and the scientist Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894).⁷⁵ As a student Boutroux had great admiration for the German ideal of Wissenschaft which was an unheard of approach in France at the time. In a letter from Heidelberg in 1869 Boutroux stated that in the German system there is a continuous relation between professors of various disciplines and that the interdisciplinary approach was the general rule whereas in France at the École Normale there was no exchange between Letters and Science.⁷⁶ It was then that Boutroux came to value the interdisciplinary approach. However Boutroux had to leave Heidelberg because of the war and soon became a professor of philosophy in a lycée at Caen.⁷⁷ It was here that his contact with the Tannery brothers stimulated his thesis which showed that the world of science coincides with the world of life.⁷⁸

Paul Tannery's first book Pour l'histoire de la science hellène put forth the view that the Greeks were the "precursors" of science rather than philosophy.⁷⁹ Tannery's main concern was to show the rational "enchainement" which has linked the evolution of each of the sciences with each other and with that civilization. Jules Tannery, on the other hand, was concerned with

distinguishing science from art in order to elucidate the basis for scientific certainty and to examine the possibility of a science of morals in the face of "the end of Christianity".⁶⁰

What Boutroux's thesis addressed itself to was not only to a critique of scientism and to the claims of positivist philosophy but also to the recent developments in science, especially biological evolution, the laws of thermodynamics and the extension of mechanical reductionism to psychology.⁶¹ In short, Boutroux wanted to integrate the philosophy of Kant and Comte with mid-nineteenth-century scientific theories. According to Boutroux what was wrong with the philosophical movements that came after Kant and Comte was that they concluded with determinism, such that it was associated with Hegel's historicism, on the one hand, and with mechanical determinism of Comte's followers on the other hand.⁶² Boutroux stressed freedom with which the mind contemplates a natural world characterized by spontaneous movement. As such, the laws of nature have no absolute existence: they merely express a stage of a given phase. Scientific laws are deterministic only when one describes only strictly defined conditions. Boutroux's approach was interesting because he fought scientism on its own grounds stating that positivism and naturalism cannot be reconciled with the method and facts of science.⁶³

Boutroux made the distinction between three types of

philosophical systems: the idealist, the materialist, and the dualist or parallelist.⁸⁴ All of these systems, maintains Boutroux, forces us to see the laws of nature as a chain of necessity with the result that they see life and liberty as illusory. It is erroneous to consider causality as a link of absolute necessity between phenomena. Du Bressis states that Boutroux refuses "to exalt the phenomena into things-in-themselves" as much as he avoids the supposition that the principle of causality governing science is a law imposed on things in the mind.⁸⁵ The scientific idea of natural cause was introduced by experience as the abstract form of a relation. Science, therefore, has, as object, a purely abstract exterior form. In Boutroux's estimation, the law of causality, in its abstract and absolute form may correctly be the practical maxim of science but such a position is an incomplete and relative truth. Boutroux insists that the world presents a radical indetermination.⁸⁶

Boutroux reminds us straight from the beginning that science begins with the activity of the senses although they cannot provide us with explanatory understanding. In order to do this observed relations have to be compared together thus allowing understanding provide the scientist with a higher point of view. While the senses observe, analyse and describe facts, the understanding interprets, classifies and explains the data of the senses. The scientific method, therefore, consists of ascertaining the necessary relations

between things. What disturbs Boutroux, however, is that the position that regards the understanding as the final point of view maintains that spontaneity is an illusion.⁸⁷ Science is the standpoint of the understanding and it sees finality as the internal reproduction of the necessary order of efficient causes and attributes the feeling of free will to ignorance. It also erroneously introduced fatalism into psychology, history, and the social sciences. What Boutroux's thesis shows is that contingency is not an illusion and that it is irreducible, thus, the standpoint of the understanding is not the standpoint of the knowledge of things.⁸⁸

Although deduction is useful as a tool in science, it is impossible to demonstrate formally that all truths can be reduced to the proposition, $A=A$.⁸⁹ All that syllogisms display are the necessary conditions; they demonstrate "derivative necessity".⁹⁰ Science admits, as postulates, certain primordial syntheses which are a priori otherwise the synthesis cannot be necessary. The synthetic judgement is "subjectively necessary, if stated a priori", although it is objectively contingent.⁹¹ Hence the synthetic a priori is but one condition imposed on the givens of the senses. The synthesis, however, does not express a necessary relation because finality implies possibility which is contrary to necessity. It is important to remember that with the possible, nothing would pass from potency to act. Boutroux here points out that it is not the terms, the

possible and the act, of which being consists, that has to be considered as posited a priori - there remains the relationship between these terms, which is at bottom, a metaphysical relationship.²² The law of being, given in experience, which states that nothing occurs without a cause, is conceived a priori.²³ As an a priori, causality is a link of necessity between phenomenon. Boutroux here reminds us that science was born when man conceived the invariable relations between things, namely, causality. But causality is the expression of the relations that arise from the observable nature of given things. Again, things change but the relationship remains constant, thus, "science has for its object a purely abstract and exterior form which does not prejudice the inmost nature of being."²⁴ Boutroux points out that it is possible that the exterior of being expresses interior laws, that exterior necessity translates the internal necessity. Boutroux maintains that in order to admit the disaccord between the postulat of science and the structures of reality, we have to contest the regularity of the course of phenomenon.²⁵ Can the cause contain everything that is needed to explain the effect? This is what Boutroux has to say:

The law of causality, in its abstract and absolute form, may thus rightly be the practical maxim of science, whose object it is to follow, one by one, the lines of an endless plan; but it does not appear as anything more than an incomplete and relative truth, when we attempt to bring before the mind that universal intertwining, that interpenetration of change and permanence, which makes up life and real existence. The world, considered

in the unity of its real existence presents a radical indetermination, doubtless too faint to be apparent if we observe things only for a very small period, though sometimes distinct enough when we compare facts separated from one another by a long series of intervening links. There is no equivalence, no relation of causality, pure and simply between the developed being and the being in process of formation."

Being is not presented to us qua being but is arranged in groups called genera and every mode contained in a lower group in a hierarchy is contained in the higher one of which the lower group is formed. Thus the mode of being can be systematized. Boutroux asks whether it is sufficient that the synthesis of "being and notion" should be posited a priori as a causal synthesis. Boutroux here argues that the link between notion and being is not some mysterious participation, a translation of pure thought into images accessible to the senses, nor a necessary systematization of phenomena, nor an immutable correlation between sensible elements." It is simply the relation of the part to the whole. The union between being and notion is a synthesis a posteriori. Boutroux concludes here that "it is contingently that notion and all the determinations of which it admits are superimposed on being". If we consider being in itself, we consider that classification as abstract and having nothing in common with being. Adding a new element clarifies being and unifies concrete multiplicity and notion is the source of this unification. The notion expresses things only systematically. The notion is unity while things are multiple and between things that resemble

each other the most there always remains differences.

Therefore the formation of notions consists of reducing reality, but between science and nature there is a large gap.

Michel Ufu understands Boutroux's argument in this manner:

De la contingence des lois de la nature est une essai de construire a priori l'intelligible, construction où tout intelligibilité peut se ramener logiquement à l'intelligence a priori de l'être. Il démontre que l'être en lui-même n'est pas nécessairement intelligible, qu'il n'est pas forme et contenu intelligible et matière en même temps. L'intelligible n'est pas une propriété de l'être, au moins il ne l'est pas originairement. Mais, l'être peut devenir intelligible par le développement auquel il est assujéti. L'être se développe et se transforme. Ce développement est inhérent à l'être mais il n'est pas prédéterminé dans l'être, dont il est contingent. La contingence est création, à chaque instant il apparaît quelque chose qui n'existait pas avant, qui n'avait non plus aucune raison d'apparaître. L'être primordial ne contient pas virtuellement les conditions de son développement ultérieur: la naissance de l'univers n'est pas nécessaire. Le développement de l'être est une création continue. La contingence règne dans le cœur de l'être; les différentes formes de l'être ne dérivent pas nécessairement les uns des autres, par contre, elles se superposent les unes aux autres d'une façon contingente. Le passage d'une forme à une autre est un bond dans l'intelligible, une rupture brusque dans le développement de l'être. Cette rupture marque l'apparition d'un élément nouveau, une création spontanée, qui, considérée dans l'étendue du monde sensible, tronque le réel en un nombre infini de corps divers. Un changement n'a pas sa raison d'être dans un autre changement, au moins il ne l'a pas nécessairement, car il peut surgir spontanément du néant. Les différents étages de la hiérarchie naturelle ne s'appuient pas nécessairement les uns sur les autres, les supérieurs ne sont pas des prolongements des inférieurs, par contre, ils se superposent arbitrairement les uns aux autres. Donc le monde est discontinu, discontinu ou contingent caractère que la nature impose à la science. Les différents ordres de connaissances forment une chaîne rompue en plusieurs endroits: "le monde des notions est essentiellement discontinu".¹⁰⁰

The fundamental form of being is matter while extension,

duration and movement are the general notions under which we arrange the things that are 'given'. These notions, of course, are irreducible because in the passage from logic to mathematics there appears new elements. Mathematical properties are not analytical syntheses of logical properties and they are not imposed on things a priori.

Boutroux goes on to say that the determinations of mathematical concepts cannot be known a priori but experience provides us with these notions without proving to us if these properties are or are not inherent in being. As a result Boutroux maintains that "the concepts of extension, duration and motion as presupposed by the knowledge of the given world, do not need a metaphysical origin".¹⁰¹ To be sure, science, based on empiricism, does not recognize a priori truths.

Boutroux points out that the fundamental law of mathematical determinations is the permanence of measureable quantity expressed in the formula of the "conservation of force".¹⁰² But can it be affirmed that the principle of the conservation of force is related to the production of motion throughout the universe? If it were the case, it would demand a metaphysical origin. In addition, this formula implies the conservation of force in a finite system of mechanical elements but such motions come within the range of experience. Boutroux therefore concludes that the transformation of extension and motion is not imposed by the mind on things or on our knowledge of things - it is a "resumé of experience".¹⁰³ Boutroux explains:

The deductive form of these sciences must not deceive us: their conclusions and their data alike are purely abstract. They determine what will happen if certain movable figures are produced and their measurable quantity remains constant. We cannot, without moving in a vicious circle regard facts as necessary, in the name of a principle whose legitimacy is based on nothing but the observation of facts. Experience, to which the

mathematical principle owes its value, itself limits the scope of the principle. We have no right to set up this principle as an absolute truth, and drag it along, so to speak, through all the sciences and even through morality blindly overthrowing everything with which it meets. This algebraical formula does not create, or even govern things, it is nothing but the expression of their exterior relations.¹⁰⁴

Boutroux, it can be said, views the appearance of matter and its modes as a victory of things over necessity.¹⁰⁴ However, extension and motion are not sufficient notions to explain all phenomena. But when, to the mathematical properties of bodies, the physico-chemical properties are added, then it becomes a question of distinguishing bodies from matter. The shift from matter to bodies allows for the possibility of new interpretations because the laws of physics and chemistry cannot sufficiently explain biological phenomena. What is important to note from this is that in the passage from the inorganic world to the organic world there is a degree a difference such that the explanation to account for the biological world cannot be simply reduced to the laws governing inorganic matter. But what is the connection between the organic world and the inorganic world? Certainly, there is no element in the organic world that does not also exist in the inorganic world, yet, maintains Boutroux, the organic world cannot be reduced to the laws of the inorganic world because there is a synthesis that occurs in the shift from the lower order of the inorganic world to that of the higher order of the organic world. What distinguishes the living world from the

inorganic world is the greater complexity of organization. As Boutroux writes,

In a word, vital function seems to be a creation, without either beginning or end, of systems whose parts show not only heterogeneity but even a hierarchical order. The living being is an individual, or rather, by continual action, it creates for itself an individuality and produces beings themselves capable of individuality. Organization is individualisation.¹⁰⁵

But Boutroux, and this is important, points out that this function does not exist in the inorganic world. What Boutroux maintains is that, for example, a crystal may be divisible indefinitely but such matter is not decomposable into smaller systems capable of individuality. But, a living being displays progress toward a hierarchical order. In other words, individualisation.¹⁰⁶ Boutroux maintains that "the elements which form the matter of life, are exclusively physical and chemical forces" but they do not remain "raw" but are "ordered, harmonized, disciplined... by superior intervention" concluding that "life is a genuine creation".¹⁰⁷

But the organic world can boast of something that is not attributed to the inorganic world, that is, the character of consciousness. Here Boutroux points out that consciousness is not "a specialisation, a development, or even a perfecting of the physiological functions", nor is it a result of physiological functions but rather "a new element, a new creation" and the form in which consciousness is superimposed on life is "an absolute synthesis, an addition of radically

heterogeneous elements", hence, implying a contingent relation.¹⁰⁸ Boutroux goes on to show that the creation of man, namely, a conscious being cannot be explained by the operation of physical and physiological laws.¹⁰⁹ The scientific method, however, does focus on the physical and mechanical conditions of the states of consciousness but Boutroux argues against the psycho-physical parallelism view of science with regards to the understanding of consciousness. Boutroux insists that the laws of mechanics and physiology are of a different order than the laws of consciousness. In short, the mechanism of the body does not account for the spontaneity of consciousness.

At this point we may ask just what is Boutroux's conclusion? Boutroux maintains that the universe is not made up of elements equal to one another susceptible to being transformed into one another. Rather, the universe is made up of forms superimposed on one another. Science, however, espouses the law of the conservation of being. But Boutroux presents two arguments against this view. The first is "the very existence of a hierarchy of worlds irreducible to one another without being coeternal" and in the second instance, there is "the possibility of improvement or of decline within these worlds themselves".¹¹⁰ At the low level of being, for example, inorganic matter, we note determinism but at the the highest level, consciousness, for example, indeterminism seems to be the principle governing that activity. At the lower

stage, below indeterminate being, there is necessity or quantity, the essence of which is unity. Thanks to a certain amount of contingency there is introduced a new form of being, matter, a thing extended and movable, the essence of which is continuity. Thus, above life and upon the foundations that it supplies, there arises consciousness. Boutroux maintains that "intelligence is the relation of the person to the things from which he is distinguished, because they appear to him as other than himself" whereas "will is the act of the person who, by virtue of his superiority, co-ordinates, organizes and reduces to unity the multiplicity both of his modes of being and of objects"¹¹¹

Each form of being is the preparation of a higher form and things multiply and diversify, the result of which is the hierarchical form. The hierarchical model of Being reconciles freedom and necessity. Necessity is a condition of the lower strata while freedom is the condition of the higher level of order. Seen from above, everything below is determined; seen from below, everything is indeterminate.¹¹² As nature that is free, man can act and "make use of the laws of nature to create works that transcend nature".¹¹³ Here we anticipate Blondel when Boutroux states that,

... external act, while they are not the whole of man and are not equivalent to the soul itself, that model which matter is incapable of imitating, may at all events be a manifestation, a more or less faithful interpretation of the intention of the will, and give experimental support to moral judgements. And, if the

order of things can be modified contingently, in order to be good it will not be sufficient to have conceived, desired, and willed the good: it will be necessary to have acted, or anyhow tried to act; for the moral consciousness regards possible good as obligatory.¹¹⁴

Boutroux continues to say that experience apprehends only things actually realized and in this case we are dealing with a creative power that is prior to action. Boutroux is quick to remark that experience itself, while it proves the contingent character of everything it brings within our knowledge, and furthermore, leaves this contingency unexplained, makes it possible to discover some other source of knowledge, the very knowledge that furnishes us with the reason of this contingency.¹¹⁵ What is suggested by experience is the superior nature of the beings revealed by their manifestations. It is true, the senses show us changes but does not explain them while the understanding, on the other hand, reveals the permanent essence of these changes supplying us with explanations of the order of things. What is significant is that the principles of things themselves cannot be seen. Boutroux tells us that to know things in the order of their creation is to know them in God.¹¹⁶ Boutroux says,

It may be said that the positive sciences, through the study of phenomena, are even now seeking God, for they try to find the first principle of things. The various concepts to which we attempt to reduce all that is given in experience are, in a sense, nothing else than definitions of God.¹¹⁷

It is easy to agree with Boutroux that to identify God with absolute necessity is rash. What we must do is resign

ourselves to introducing an inexplicable principle in the idea of God and this principle must be synthetic.¹¹⁰ But, of course, this irreducible synthesis, as a final postulate would be an arbitrary conception. What Boutroux is saying is that neither experience nor a logical elaboration of experience can supply the "idea of God".¹¹¹ But, does the world, as it is given in experience, constitute the whole of reality? Here with Boutroux, again, we anticipate a theme that will be expanded by Blondel. Boutroux answers that as we ascend the scale of being we notice a development of some inner principle which resembles necessity, namely, an attraction for certain objects. Boutroux insists that "the being would seem to be led necessarily", not driven by something already realized but "attracted by a thing not yet given, and one which perhaps, never will be".¹¹² This seems to suggest, I think, a teleological operation of an ethical will. Again Boutroux writes.

If we consider man, we find that he becomes acquainted with necessity in a form even farther removed from the conditions of experience: the form of desire. He feels simultaneously that he should act in a certain way and that he can act in another way.¹¹³

Here Boutroux suggests the conflict of the will and again Boutroux anticipates Blondel when he writes,

... to know the relation between the sensible and the suprasensible, there is needed a faculty, for which both fact and idea, sign and thing signified, cease to be radically distinct. Man exhibits and becomes conscious of this faculty, when working for the realization of an attractive or an obligatory idea. Action, imparting its own virtue to the intellect, introduces this latter to a higher world, of which the visible worlds were but the

dead product. On the one hand, it reveals to the intellect the reality of power or of cause, as the creative and spontaneous principle which exists before, during and after its manifestation. On the other hand, it shows the intellect that this power cannot pass over into action and be what it wills to be, unless connected, as with a principle of life and perfection, so to speak, with an end looked upon as necessary, i.e. as good, worthy to be pursued and realized.¹²²

We have seen thus far that the concept of necessity acquires a value that is real because it becomes possible to conceive the existence of an absolutely necessary object provided, of course, we admit that there exists an absolute freedom that is capable of realizing the object in question. While from the external point of view reality appears fixed and limited, from the inside as we "apprehend our being in its true origin we find that freedom is an infinite power".¹²³ Boutroux insists that "we are conscious of this power every time we truly act" and yet because our actions do not and cannot realize it, we are not this power ourselves, but it nonetheless exists because "it is the root of our very being".¹²⁴ In Boutroux's estimate, the moral life is "the effort of the free being to realize an end which, in itself, absolutely merits realization".¹²⁵ In a theological manner Boutroux writes that,

God is that being, of whose creative activity we are conscious deep within ourselves, in all our efforts to draw nearer to Him. He is the one perfect and necessary being.¹²⁶

What Boutroux is saying is that God is that necessity that gives us our freedom in order to realize him. From Boutroux's point of view it is God's activity and providence that makes

It possible for higher forms to possess the ability to employ lower forms as instrument. This doctrine of divine freedom, as Boutroux sees it, is the explanation for the contingency in the hierarchy of general laws and forms of the world. Boutroux goes on to say that the goal of the beings of nature is not merely to continue existence and to yield to the external conditions but to realize an ideal which is precisely that of drawing nearer to God.

When it is applied to all forms of being this doctrine of the realization of higher ends, again, seems to explain, according to Boutroux, contingency. The ideal, the "binding object of pursuit" is the good and the beautiful which is accomplished by man, endowed with "intelligent spontaneity".¹²⁷ From Boutroux position it becomes apparent that man's free will enables him to influence the current of his desires and transform them into "higher wills".¹²⁸ Consequently, man dominates nature but this free spontaneity, in love with its acts, allows itself to be determined by them and thus, free acts are transformed into habits.¹²⁹ Boutroux explains,

Human activity, nevertheless, more and more determined by the exclusive repetition of the same acts, gradually degenerates into a blind, inevitable, and uniform tendency, and produces phenomena whose order of succession is perceptibly constant. Seen from without, these phenomena appear to be nothing but the expression of a positive law or a necessary relation between objects of experience.... Statistics makes a legitimate invasion of the ground left abandoned by free will, and its conclusions are perceptibly confirmed by facts when it operates over wide areas, because the men who break through the thick layer of habit to awaken and exert

their free will are few in number compared with those who are swayed by habit. It is the former, however, who are really the rulers of the rule: the mechanical activities of the many are but the reactions of the impulse which the few have initiated.¹³⁰

Boutroux continues,

Heredity and instinct, character and habit cease to be absolutely inevitable laws when they are found, in essence, to be no more than the reaction of acts upon spontaneity. The very will that has created for itself a habit can modify it in order to rise higher, and also so that they may become stepping-stones to higher development, just as it can also forget itself in passive habits which paralyse it more and more.¹³¹

Boutroux concludes that "life cannot be a product of mechanical forces"¹³² It is important to note the power given to freedom and spontaneous consciousness, because, while they are unable to create forces that are analogous to physical nature, nonetheless, "by a series of mysterious operations" can extend "into matter the aspiration of his soul towards the ideal, and, not only to bring about a reconciliation between the lower beings and himself, but also to awaken in them such a degree of progress as nature could not have affected".¹³³ It is important and quite significant that here from what Boutroux has to say, that to rule over habits is, indeed, a moral activity which is made possible by man's freedom. In the relations organic/inorganic, consciousness/unconsciousness, freedom/necessity, society/individual, it is the higher term that makes possible morality, To this Boutroux says that,

It is because the living world... possesses, in organization, an ébauche, so to speak, of this harmony, that it bends to its own purposes the inorganic world,

over which reign uniformity, division, and isolation. And, in the human person, it is because the psychic powers are reduced to unity by consciousness that the soul is mistress of the body, in which each organ aspires after a separate life. It is because the will is subordinated to an end, which in turn communicates to it its own unity, that it is able to rule over the passions, each of which would fain absorb all the forces of the soul, and which, consequently, oppose and weaken one another. In short, it is because society is a moral hierarchy and so possesses superior unity, that it is capable of extending the power of man and of increasing indefinitely, so to speak, his rule over things and over himself.¹³⁴

But Boutroux warns us that.

... while man is powerful by means of society which coordinates his forces, on the other hand, the more he isolates himself, devoting his life to a lower object, the less becomes his inner and outer freedom. In the depths of his own nature he encounters passions which sway him in every direction and which he has no longer the power to overcome.¹³⁵

It is Boutroux's contention that "human nature bears within itself the signs of a higher destination or purpose than the individual life".¹³⁶ Once again we see Boutroux anticipating Blondel's belief, that behind the willing there lies an immanent operation that points towards the absolute. Boutroux concludes here that on the psychological level man displays degrees of contingency, that freedom can modify a habit and that fixed laws are "the expression of whatsoever element the soul has passed on to habit".¹³⁷

The question can be raised at this point whether the doctrine of spontaneity can be applicable to beings devoid of consciousness. It is true, these beings do not possess the higher form of spontaneity that is called free will which consists in pursuing distant goals but Boutroux concedes some

form of spontaneity but cannot say to what degree this spontaneity may exist. Would lower beings be beings at all if they were "nothing in themselves"?¹³⁸ It is with the analogy to man's own soul that Boutroux speculates that "the lower forms are, like man, susceptible of improvement" and that they have an ideal, "that of resembling in their own way, the higher forms, in a word, of resembling God Himself".¹³⁹ Boutroux argues that at every stage there exists a degree of spontaneity which is proportioned to the nature and value of its particular ideal although the spontaneity of the lower beings are "blind and incapable of mediate tendencies" and "determined, limited, absorbed in things to an extent of which human habit gives but a faint idea".¹⁴⁰ From this view, therefore, fatality is not an essence of being but rather accidental to it. It is Boutroux's contention that there is for all beings an ideal to which spontaneity adapts in the pursuit of this ideal. In addition, Boutroux also argues for the spontaneity of even the abstract forms of being when he says that "logical order, or the subordination of facts to notion, holds concealed... the spontaneous activity of inner reason or the final cause, the notion or conception of which is only the logical sign".¹⁴¹ In a similar manner Boutroux believes that the ontological order hold concealed the true causes or "metaphysical powers" which produce the changes in the of the world. Boutroux writes that these "metaphysical powers" are,

... almost identical with fatality, since they are ... the habit of being upon which all other powers are based, nonetheless retain in their inmost essence a remnant of spontaneity, the object of which is to produce the utmost possible with the fewest materials to create effects transcending their external conditions, their phenomenal cause.¹⁴²

From this Boutroux concludes that,

The idea of necessity is, at bottom, the translation, into as abstract logical language as possible, of the activity exercised by the ideal upon things, by God upon His creatures.¹⁴³

According to Boutroux this is the most material symbol of moral obligation and aesthetic attraction "of necessity assented to and experienced."¹⁴⁴ What Boutroux is trying to say is that, according to the doctrine of contingency, the final principles of things are still laws, moral and aesthetic laws which are more or less immediate expressions of divine perfection which exists previous to experience and presupposes agents gifted with spontaneity.¹⁴⁵ From this we can say ~~that the laws of nature have no absolute existence~~ because according to Boutroux they express a given phase. They express a moral or aesthetic degree of things, or to put it in Boutroux's terms they are the image of a model that is alive.¹⁴⁶ Why these laws appear constant is because of the stability inherent in the ideal itself. Being remains stationary in general because it is under that form of habit that the participation of the ideal takes place. Being assumes the form called habit. Finally Boutroux offers his final conclusion:

Now, habit, a divine grace when active and regarded as a

stage enabling one to rise still higher, becomes a cause of weakness, of dissipation of energy, and of decay, when regarded as an ultimate term, when it is passive. The more deep-rooted and passive when the ideal is less mediate and lofty, habit successively expresses itself by faculties, instincts, properties, and forces. It gives the lower beings the appearance of a series of life-less laws. Habit, however, is not the substitution of a substantial fatality for spontaneity: it is a state of spontaneity itself. This latter then remains, under the laws to which it appears subject: it may continue sensitive to the attraction of superior goodness and beauty. At every stage, spontaneity may unite itself with its ideal and perfect its own nature. In attachment to this ideal it finds a superabundance of energy, enabling it to collect together the elements scattered broadcast by passive habit and to organize them with a view to new conquests. In proportion as beings thus cease to live solely for themselves, and as the subordination of the lower being to the higher, the inner adaptation of the conditions to the conditioned, of matter to form, becomes more spontaneous and complete: in like proportion do we find diminution, throughout the world, of uniformity, homogeneity, and equality, i.e. of the undisputed sway of physical fatality. The complete triumph of the good and the beautiful would do away with the laws of nature, strictly so called, and would replace them by the free flight of human wills towards perfection, by the untrammelled hierarchy of souls.¹⁴

Léon Ollé-Laprune and Moral Certitude

It has been pointed out that after the revolution in France Christian apologetics underwent a change by turning away from Cartesian rational type of philosophical method to a romantic type of apologetics whose original method could be attributed to Chateaubriand's Le Génie du Christianisme in 1802 which stated the need for a new type of apologetics. The traditionalists had insisted on grounds other than rationalism. In true romantic fashion it appealed to the needs and aspirations rather than approaching the line of

argument from a rationalist position. As we saw before, stimulating the will to believe was a strategy that suggested that faith could be grounded on the will rather than on reason.¹⁴⁸ This line of reasoning was taken by Ollé-Laprune who in sharing Gratry's conviction that if truth is indivisible, then there can be no opposition between faith and reason but what had to be rational was man's acts or, in another way, his willing. Copleston puts the issue in perspective when he asks if there "can be a legitimate certitude, legitimate from the rational point of view, in which the will plays an effective role" in the admission of faith.¹⁴⁹ Ollé-Laprune was convinced that the knowledge of truth was grounded on moral integrity and real certitude was not solely an intellectual matter. He was also convinced that religion and science could be reconciled within the framework of Catholicism.¹⁵⁰ This issue will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

We must begin here by trying to understand what Ollé-Laprune means by "vérités de l'ordre moral".¹⁵¹ Ollé-Laprune maintains that moral truths and metaphysical truths form what can be called the order of moral things or the religious order by the fact that metaphysics is linked with religious questions. The divine, according to Ollé-Laprune, reveals itself by the incompleteness that one feels about himself. In this way metaphysics, morality and natural religion all interpenetrate one another, hence, we

understand them as truths of the moral order. From Ollé-Laprune's position we may ask just how are moral truths linked to one another and form an indissoluble system?

Ollé-Laprune understands the "moral life" as being the activity which implicates the idea of "ought" or duty. The truth of the moral order is understood as a "law" or "condition" of the moral life.¹⁵² Freedom; to be sure, appears to be a condition of morality. But what happens when it relates to duty? According to Ollé-Laprune it is the indispensable condition and truth of the moral order. Ollé-Laprune reminds us that while duty exercises power, it nevertheless creates hope, that is, hope for a better life.¹⁵³ Therefore It is easy to see how the elements of the moral order consists for Ollé-Laprune as, being the moral law, free morality, the existence of God and, the future life.¹⁵⁴

The certitude in this order of truths can only be designated as "moral certitude".¹⁵⁵ From here we can anticipate Ollé-Laprune's method, namely, to show that the certitude of moral truths belong to a different order and that they presume personal conditions, that is, subjectivity, without the truth itself being reduced to subjectivity.¹⁵⁶

To designate the particular character that makes up the link of moral truths, Ollé-Laprune uses the term "faith", while making, nonetheless, the distinction between natural faith and supernatural faith.¹⁵⁷ Faith, Ollé-Laprune says,

whether rational or natural, has its principle in man's constitution.¹⁵⁰ What Ollé-Laprune is trying to do is to examine the conditions of certitude in the order of moral things and natural religion as well as that of faith which we have simply by being human.

Influenced by Newman's A Grammar of Assent (1870) Ollé-Laprune distinguishes between implicit assent and explicit assent where, in the former it is determined by perception, while in the latter, it comes about as a result of a reflective appropriation of implicit knowledge.¹⁵¹ In both cases doubt exists. From this, Ollé-Laprune maintains that there is a real certitude and an abstract certitude; the former is attached to things while the latter is attached to notions.¹⁵² The real assent to things is direct and immediate while the notional assent needs clarity, hence it separates appearance from the thing-in-itself.¹⁵³ Again, the notional certitude consists of a reflected assent towards a formal truth; the real certitude is a practical and experimental certitude while the notional certitude is a certitude of logic and speculation. Another way of presenting the dualism is to say that implicit certitude is a real certitude while explicit certitude presupposes abstract notions. But the explicit certitude, argues Ollé-Laprune, has to be both real and practical, while both logical and speculative. In short, it is a reflective appropriation of implicit knowledge.¹⁵⁴

It is obvious that Ollé-Laprune gives priority to real, experimental, practical and moral knowledge.

Ollé-Laprune states that,

...si la certitude spéculative ne peut suffire seule, c'est pour un motif plus grave encore: c'est parce que seule elle n'a point de consistance, elle n'a qu'une valeur formelle et logique elle n'est pas la certitude dont l'homme a besoin et que les vérités morales réclament.

What Ollé-Laprune is saying is that the will has a moral role. But what, may we ask, is the role of the will in matters of certitude? Ollé-Laprune answers that the will, when separated from all intellect dissipates into nothing but in intellectual operations the will is involved. It is the will that places and fixes the spirit on a terrain where it has to operate. All intellectual operations consists, ultimately, of willing. With regards to the scholastic distinction between "la simple appréhension et l'assentiment", both are attributable to intelligence but it is the assent which is grounded on willing. The will operates the intellectual act of choosing. Furthermore, when the mind is not engaged in an assent to first principles that are self-evident but rather is engaged in discursive reasoning, the effort of the will is needed.

To prove his point Ollé-Laprune points out that Descartes is wrong to say that to assert or deny are different forms of the will. In truth, says Ollé-Laprune, it is not the will that judges. Assent at times differs from apprehension. There are times when the assent has no need for

the will but the consentment, however, is what is joined to the will.¹⁰⁷ Again, to emphasize the point, Ollé-Laprune argues that it is in the moral order, as everywhere else, for that matter, that the role of the will consists in preparing the human spirit to see and to judge, to uphold and maintain attention and to solidify the adhesion of the truth.¹⁰⁸ It is these moments that moral character is shaped. Moral conditions ground these moments towards the truth.

Ultimately the certitude of moral things is a personal certitude. Ollé-Laprune explains:

Enfin c'est une chose manifeste que, dans l'ordre des vérités morales l'adhésion de la volonté est requise comme condition de l'assentiment complet et définitif de l'esprit. L'homme est libre dans l'acceptation de ces vérités: non qu'il ait le droit de les méconnaître, de les rejeter: mais il a le devoir de vouloir qu'elles soient quand elles se montrent à lui: il ne les voit bien que si sa volonté les accueille. La certitude de Dieu, si l'on peut parler de la sorte, est la certitude de l'Être qui étant par soi, possède tout dans l'infinie richesse de son essence parfaite: ce qu'il sait, c'est qu'il est, et ce qu'il fait, ce qui n'est pas lui dépendant encore de lui comme la cause absolument première. La certitude de l'homme a quelque analogie avec cette divine certitude: pour adhérer comme il faut au bien, il faut qu'il soit bon et pratique le bien: pour reconnaître comme il faut la vérité morale, il faut qu'il soit d'une certaine manière semblable à son objet, selon le mot des philosophes anciens, il faut qu'il fasse la vérité, selon l'admirable parole de l'Évangile: ce qu'il sait, il faut qu'il le soit en quelque manière, et qu'il le fasse. La certitude complète est personnelle: elle est l'acte totale de l'âme même embrassant par un libre choix, non moins que par un ferme jugement, la vérité présente, lumière et loi, objet de contemplation et d'amour, de respect et d'obéissance.¹⁰⁹

Ollé-Laprune has so far dealt with the relation between will and certitude. But now Ollé-Laprune goes on to make the distinction between knowing and believing. Here he

maintains that knowing contains an element of belief when one accepts another's testimony. When we know things, it is because there is a fiduciary element that resides in our knowing.¹⁷⁰ In addition, knowledge can be direct or it can be mediated. In this way, Ollé-Laprune claims that, in a certain measure, mediated knowledge and belief have a common ground, that is, each suppose the existence of an intermediary between object and subject. Therefore, mediated or indirect knowledge is linked with belief and faith.¹⁷¹ What Ollé-Laprune means by faith is that it has the characteristic of confidence but it is not blind except in cases of infallible authority and the evidence of authority is the reason of faith.¹⁷² Ollé-Laprune points out that when faith is established as being one of the elements of certitude in the order of moral truths, it is natural to have a prejudiced view and see only faith. We misunderstand the rational element because faith envelops everything. This is the fideistic position that Ollé-Laprune wishes to combat.

To demonstrate the role of faith Ollé-Laprune examines the theories that exalt faith and the theories that denigrate faith. Ollé-Laprune, for example, sees in both Pascal and Maine de Biran the attempt to exaggerate the role of faith to the detriment of reason. Ollé-Laprune sees Pascal's Pensées as an attempt to answer the question concerning how one is to believe. Likewise, Maine de Biran provides another example of "la methode morale" indicated by

Pascal.¹⁷² Ollé-Laprune points to their similarities. For example, while Pascal distinguishes three orders, Maine de Biran distinguishes three lives.¹⁷³ Both of them attempt to answer the question of how to go from the inferior to the supreme sphere and how to elevate oneself to the third life. For both, the cry of the heart provides the method of attaining the highest mode of existence and both attribute a primordial role to faith in the certitude of moral truths.

Ollé-Laprune summarizes Pascal's and de Biran's efforts in this way:

La primauté de l'ordre moral, l'impossibilité d'entrer dans le monde supérieur sans le concours de la volonté, les moyens de rendre la volonté bonne, de la guérir, de la fortifier et de disposer par elle la raison à bien voir et à bien juger, voilà ce qu'ils établissent, l'un avec l'ascendant et l'éclat du génie, l'autre avec la tranquille autorité d'un esprit profondément philosophique, tous les deux avec une admirable sincérité, et en pratiquant eux-mêmes la méthode qu'ils enseignent. Mais tous les deux aussi tendent à exagérer le rôle de la foi: tous les deux tendent à ne plus considérer qu'elle, et dans l'ordre moral et à la base de toute pensée. Il faut, savoir, même dans les écrits de tels, reconnaître et signaler ce péril.¹⁷²

Ollé-Laprune insists, that, in showing that faith plays a role in the certitude of transcendental truths, it does not mean that one has to remove the intellectual element, exclude knowledge and, hence, destroy reason.

Ollé-Laprune points out that for Kant and Fichte reason and faith are separated, the object of faith being outside the conditions of thought.¹⁷³ For Hamilton and Mansel, in a more radical way, reason and faith are in absolute opposition to each other, the object of faith being contrary to the laws of thought.¹⁷⁴ According to Ollé-Laprune, the conclusion of these thinkers is problematic because in them skepticism favors moral faith. At this point, Ollé-Laprune asks how can faith and skepticism go hand in hand? How can reason be removed to make place for faith? Finally, what kind of faith are we talking about when we make it the foundation of knowledge?¹⁷⁵ Ollé-Laprune argues, that, rather than appeal to morals in order to chase away doubt, we should consider

that a moral act is the ground of all affirmation of reality.¹⁷⁷ In anticipation of Blondel's thesis, Ollé-Laprune writes,

Toute action suppose et révèle l'être. L'action morale, plus complète que toute autre, plus totalement humaine révèle mieux que toute autre, la réalité, la réalité de l'être, qui agit, du milieu où il agit, de la loi sous laquelle il agit, et du divin Législateur dont il reçoit sans cesse l'action.¹⁷⁸

What Ollé-Laprune wishes to stress is that there is nothing better than duty and obligation to strengthen a shaken intelligence. Ollé-Laprune is aware of the need for a new faculty that will make it possible to go from representation, which imprisons all knowledge, to that of a reality which is above and beyond these representations and it is thinkers like Kant, Jacobi, Fichte, Hamilton, Maine de Biran and Pascal that affirm an instinctive faith as being at the origin of all knowledge. Faith, for them, becomes the method by which one attains the supra-sensible.¹⁷⁹ Ollé-Laprune insists that there is a link between man's destiny and his faculties:

Disons d'un autre côté que si partout, en toute connaissance, se rencontre un élément de foi, si dans le fond notre adhésion à toute vérité, quelle qu'elle soit, suppose je ne sais quelle confiance, qui, même instinctive et naturelle, semble avoir déjà quelque caractère moral, il y a là une secrète et admirable harmonie entre la vraie fin de l'homme et ses facultés.¹⁸⁰

Ollé-Laprune is adamant that if there is a primitive faith, then there must also be a primitive evidence- they find each other, inseparably united one to the other in the initial

affirmations of reason.¹⁸¹

Olle-Laprune, therefore, argues against those who deny knowledge of metaphysical truths by maintaining that indirect and limited knowledge is, nonetheless, real knowledge and if moral things requires from us, in order to know them, certain moral conditions to be fulfilled, once these conditions are filled, then, the moral things become known.¹⁸² Against these thinkers who place faith prior to everything, Olle-Laprune insists that reality is legitimately affirmed prior to any preoccupation with faith. Hence, to really know "c'est indivisiblement, en dehors des artifices de la réflexion, saisir les phénomènes et l'être réel qui en est le principe".¹⁸³ To forget these distinctions is to exalt faith and thereby exposing it to be destroyed. From Olle-Laprune's position, such a doctrine is called fideism but it is skepticism which gathers together the heritage of fideism.

We may ask what is the result of the fideistic heritage? Olle-Laprune maintains that in the fideistic heritage, which argues that faith, epistemologically, goes beyond science, we can discern three kinds of schools of thought with fideism as their common principle: a skepticism that is moderate and reserved, a skepticism that is daring and radical and finally, positivism. These three systems are labeled: "le demi-scepticisme", "l'inconnaissable" and positivism. In short, these are the various ways of

depreciating moral faith.¹⁰⁴ The position of semi-skepticism, according to Ollé-Laprune, was the position held by Cournot with his probability philosophy which reminds Ollé-Laprune of 17th century thinkers who used the term "assurance morale", such as Locke's surplus of belief. These indices of belief also invoked by Leibniz and Descartes are merely shadows of moral certitude, according to Ollé-Laprune.¹⁰⁵ The position labeled as "l'inconnaissable" refers to Herbert Spencer's fideistic skepticism, who like Kant, Fichte, Hamilton and Mansel, gives faith a immense role because knowledge simply rests on faith itself; yet, at the same time, Spencer depreciates faith by condemning it to ignorance.¹⁰⁶ Ollé-Laprune believes that Spencer leaves faith within a thick cloak of obscurity, in the presence of an object, it cannot seize; yet science marches on and conquers and dominates the world.¹⁰⁷ Finally, Ollé-Laprune points out that positivism attempts to sweep those "nonscientific" aspirations of man under the rug, because such activity is deemed useless, dangerous and pitiful. In short, positivism brings morality into what is the physical sphere and explains morals in terms of passion and imagination and treats morals as poetic revery, illusion and idle fancy.¹⁰⁸

Ollé-Laprune also takes on the notion of moral certitude in the critical school of Renouvier. Renouvier, he points out, protests against positivism in the name of

criticism but admits to the role of moral faith but he is radical in calling moral faith a "vertige mental".¹⁸⁷

Again, Ollé-Laprune affirms the elements of Renouvier's criticism as being positivism, fideism, skepticism, all proceeding from the Kantian legacy, namely, the impotence of reason to know the transcendent and the supremacy of moral faith. But Ollé-Laprune thinks Renouvier's theory should be called "subjectivisme critique et moral".¹⁸⁸ The two currents in philosophy, emerging from Kant, according to Ollé-Laprune, consists of, on the one hand, subjectivism and on the other hand, the primacy of moral certitude. However, this position concerning the primacy of moral faith finds itself in thinkers outside the Kantian influence as well as does in opposition to Kant such as Jacobi and Maine de Biran. Ollé-Laprune sees Gratry as one who owes nothing to Kant, but insists on the moral conditions of knowledge.¹⁸⁹ The issue as Ollé-Laprune sees it consists of the constant oscillation between skepticism and mysticism. Ollé-Laprune describes the intellectual climate in this way:

... en face de la religion un fier dédain du dogme et de la pratique, et une haute revendication des droits de la raison déclarée parfaitement suffisante pour la vie morale et religieuse: c'est du rationalisme; en face de la science, un très humble sentiment des limites de cette même raison et une grande facilité à répéter qu'elle est impuissante à dépasser les phénomènes: c'est du positivisme; avec cela une habitude de ne rien affirmer qu'à demi, de n'être jamais tout à fait d'aucun parti, de ne rien condamner, de tolérer, de goûter tout, de se plaire dans les nuances, dans les à peu près: c'est du scepticisme; puis, avec un mépris presque constant de la logique ordinaire et des vigoureux procédés dont elle trace les règles, un penchant vif pour une dialectique à

outrance, subtile, raffiné: c'est du criticisme de dilettante et d'artiste.¹⁷²

There is one thing that these philosophers take seriously and that is morality. The practical order remains intact. In addition, logic belongs to the intellect while morality belongs to the will and the moral sphere, the practical sphere created by free will, remains inaccessible to the intellect. In fact, it is faith, or belief, that maintains moral certitude and this is "fideisme".¹⁷³ This fideism is subjective because all certitude remains on the personal level. The current trend, as Ollé-Laprune sees it, tends towards subjectivism.

The problem for Ollé-Laprune is to denote whether truth is reduced to the purely subjective realm since moral certitude contains a subjective personal element.

Ollé-Laprune maintains that in the order of knowledge certain dispositions or conditions are required a priori while moral truths, that is, rules for the will and reason for the spirit, requires a moral act, an act that conforms to their nature, in order for them to be accepted. But in what way does this requirement, which creates for us an obligation, renders the truth dependent upon the subject who embraces it? Furthermore, does an obligation cease to be universal because each one takes it for a rule of conduct, to regulate one's life? Ollé-Laprune answers by saying that all willing is ordered to do all that it is made to do in order that the universal light of the truth appears and enlightens without

obstacles.¹⁹⁴ Ollé-Laprune insists that the personal act, which is required, has, in order to assent, not the truth of the person but the person of the truth.¹⁹⁵

Ollé-Laprune goes on to ask whether in the moral order it is a question of not simply knowing but in believing because that belief is a surplus of affirmation, surpassing knowledge itself. Ollé-Laprune suggests that this surplus of affirmation is itself authorized by that reason which judges it to be required by sufficient motives much more than it recognizes it as obligation. The conclusion is that there is no blind élan; there is a knowledge and a reason to believe and an ought to believe. The light of reason is engaged in the act of faith but the intellectual element is not abolished.¹⁹⁶ Moral truths, Ollé-Laprune is quick to point out, demand both the consent of the will and the assent of reason. As such moral truths demand the adherence of the total person.¹⁹⁷ In this way we can say with Ollé-Laprune that the affirmation of moral truths has a principle that is objectively sufficient. The evidence of moral truths is, for all as long as everyone is equally disposed to see the truth and it is obligatory that everyone work towards seeing the truth. In addition, Ollé-Laprune maintains that if the will has done all that is required, evidence will appear- such is the power of "la bonne volonté"¹⁹⁸

What is "la bonne volonté"? Ollé-Laprune maintains that it consists of a willingness to overcome a weak will. It

is the renewal of the will and it consists of a desire to do better. In addition, it is a practical and efficacious desire. The destiny of man is not to know but to be good.¹⁷⁷ No matter how intelligent or how a master of the universe a man may be, in Ollé-Laprune's estimate, if he is not good, he has missed his destiny. To know what one ought to do to be good is more important, according to Ollé-Laprune, than all the scientific knowledge that one may possess.²⁰⁰ Therefore the conclusion here is that ethics stands above science.

Ollé-Laprune points out that the natural aptitude to recognize the moral law, to distinguish right from wrong, to have moral responsibility and free will, to know God and to be aware of future life, does not prove that man does not need help. From this Ollé-Laprune maintains that the empire of tradition is more than a mere custodian of the past. It is the transmission of the results of correct action in human history.²⁰¹ Again, to reiterate, if the will does all that it ought to do, if there is really "bonne volonté", the evidence proper to moral things will appear. All men of "bonne volonté", says Ollé-Laprune, can recognize primordial truths.²⁰² The "bonne volonté" diminishes human error and helps regain man's destiny. More than once does Ollé-Laprune remind us that although our dispositions are subjective, moral truths have the character of objectivity; after all, that "bonne volonté" links itself to the good, that fixed

object or goal which obligation, to which it is linked, discloses to the "bonne volonté", a sovereign authority of truth.²⁰³

Moral certitude does not have the logical, rational and scientific character to defend its arguments. Its method is persuasive. Moral certitude has to "faire voir la vérité et faire vouloir que la vérité soit".²⁰⁴

Therefore, accordingly, the transmission of moral truths cannot be done immediately through reasoning in a calculating way. Moral truths, says Ollé-Laprune, are transmitted pedagogically by way of persuasion. It consists of the development of the soul, a culturation of the human person, an initiation in selfdevelopment and more important, it consists in making moral truths a substance of oneself.

Unlike scientific proofs, moral proofs are incomplete.

Propositions in moral education are symbolic rather than formulas.²⁰⁵ Unlike mathematics, moral demonstrations are never final but always in progress. It consists of a process. Furthermore, the persuasion of moral truths consists of a discourse between true persons as well as with oneself.

Ollé-Laprune insists that the proofs of moral truths are inefficacious without the good will, the "bonne volonté". It may be said that the "bonne volonté" is a consent of a right will to a truth not yet known. It is a disposition towards the truth where blindness to the truth is impossible.

Ollé-Laprune says that

La certitude morale est une certitude fondée en raison, d'un ordre à part, mais parfaitement légitime et qu'il est possible de la faire valoir hors de soi, de la soutenir par des preuves solides, de la communiquer par une méthode à la fois rationnelle et morale. Non seulement c'est une persuasion dont l'on se trouve bien, que l'on garde comme un cher trésor, que l'on souhaite aux autres comme un très grave bien: c'est une conviction dont on établit la valeur objective. et on peut l'imposer aux autres; on leur montre, en effet, et les raisons qui la fondent et les devoirs de se la procurer.²⁰⁶

Ollé-Laprune maintains a seemingly radical position. when he says that we cannot believe nor affirm with certitude moral truths without at the same time, judging others to be wrong for not affirming the same truths.²⁰⁷ According to Ollé-Laprune, therefore, the very assurance comes from the truth itself. This does not mean that one must impose on others the moral truths of one's convictions but rather declare that they too have their duties, which we have ourselves and that the truth is the principle of their human spirit as well as ours. It is here that Ollé-Laprune accuses Kant when he says that "Kant, qui trouve illégitime la prétention de faire valoir hors de soi la foi morale, ne dit-il pas qu'on peut imposer aux autres hommes les jugements de goût d'une manière nécessaire et universelle?"²⁰⁸ In another instant Ollé-Laprune says that "Kant s'abuse. S'il n'y a ni orgueil ni témérité à faire valoir hors de soi les jugements de goût, il n'y a ni témérité ni orgueil à faire valoir hors de soi les affirmations de la foi morale".²⁰⁹

Ollé-Laprune suggests that the convinced believer

must make the other see what he sees. One must elicit the other's will not be coercing what one must see but by commanding one to remove the obstacle that prevents him from seeing the truth.²¹⁰ According to Ollé-Laprune this method would, of course, be the Socratic method. Ollé-Laprune insists that it is the same reason that discerns the truth in the moral order and in the speculative order. Reason, he goes on to say, is not absolutely infallible simply because it is finite. It is at this point that Ollé-Laprune quotes Thomas Aquinas' Summa theologiae where it states that the reason cannot err with regards to propositions which are known by themselves and from there comes the infallibility of what is deduced with certainty from first principles.²¹¹ Reason, therefore, from this standpoint, has a principle of certitude, a rule of certitude such that the certainty of reason's conclusions depend on conditions outside of reason itself and depends particularly on the moral dispositions of the thinker.²¹²

There is a distinction that Ollé-Laprune makes between a "high" reason and a "low" reason, or inferior reason. The higher reason understands what the lower reason does not suspect because it has a higher reach of vision and its horizon reaches farther. As Ollé-Laprune puts the matter:

Trop souvent la raison inférieure prenant sa mesure pour la mesure des choses supprime en quelque sorte, par une téméraire et insolente négation, tout ce qu'elle ne voit pas. La raison supérieure ne nie rien de ce qui lui

échappe; elle nie que son horizon, si vaste qu'il soit, égale l'entendue des choses, et, par cette sage et féconde négation, elle efface pour ainsi dire les inévitables limites de tout esprit créé.²¹³

High reason discerns the wisdom and truth of a superior order; it understands the reasons of the heart which a petty reason does not understand. Ultimately, it is not the individual nor the majority that decides the truth but, rather, the truth itself. Man always aspires in some way to the truth and always feels the need for an external rule, a fixed sanctuary, a residue of objectivity.²¹⁴ As a believer, Ollé-Laprune upholds the belief that neither the law of ancient Greeks nor the public opinion of moderns satisfy the need for that external, objective truth which unites man with his need for freedom to judge. That external rule, of course, is given by Christianity and it resides in the Catholic Church.²¹⁵ Therefore the double need of man, freedom/reason and external rule, is found in the supernatural order and in the natural order. Ollé-Laprune writes,

Nulle part ailleurs, quoi qu'en puissent dire des esprits ignorants ou prévenus, nulle part ailleurs, le double besoin de l'homme ne reçoit une telle satisfaction, nulle part ailleurs la liberté du jugement individuel et l'autorité d'une règle extérieure ne sont ainsi conciliées; et c'est une des marques de la vérité du christianisme que cette conformité avec les plus profondes aspirations de la nature humaine.²¹⁶

Two things need to be mentioned here with regards to the truth and the rule from the outside. In the first instance, that truth, without having a fixed seat, a

permanent tribunal or an infallible organ, is the mistress of spirit and will because it makes clear the human reason and is the voice of conscience. In the second instance, the existence of an infallible rule, external of faith and the mores of the Catholic Church, does not prevent the certitude that we acquire through personal evidence, but assumes that man possesses a rule of certitude in reasonable nature itself and without this the authority of the Church would not be recognized.²¹⁷ Ollé-Laprune further suggests that, although there are auxiliary powers that are indispensable, it is, nevertheless, necessary, to admit and uphold the position that individual reason is the method by which we discern the true from the false. There has to be a method of certitude independent of all external methods and it is the very first principles of thought that are the first rule of certitude. It is in the roots of the human intellect that we find that universality of reason that makes possible moral truths.²¹⁸ To put it in another way, Ollé-Laprune is saying that man has a duty of not making an obstacle to the truth and to judge moral truths is not solely the expertise of the understanding but rather an affair of the will. It is the will that removes any obstacle to the truth.²¹⁹ Everyman has an obligation to the truth and this obligation when it is exercised prevents a division of communal spirits although Ollé-Laprune admits that dissent with regards to moral truth is a human condition.

Ollé-Laprune maintains that between reason and faith there resides a superior order of truths which unites belief and knowledge:

Il n'y a partout qu'une seule et même raison; entre la connaissance et la croyance, entre la science et la foi, il n'y a ni contradiction ni désaccord; mais il y a un ordre supérieure de vérité où la croyance l'unit et s'ajoute à la connaissance, où la foi est une des conditions de la certitude. Cet ordre supérieur ne s'élève pas sur les ruines de tout le reste: il domine tout, mais il suppose ce qu'il dépasse; l'homme, pour y arriver, a besoin de toutes les forces unies de son âme, et la raison, pour en juger, a besoin d'une préparation appropriée Les choses morales, les choses divines échappent à qui n'en vit point et n'en veut point vivre.... La bonne volonté ne forme pas la créance, mais elle la prépare; elle ne fait pas naître la lumière, mais elle dispose l'esprit à la voir.²²⁰

We come to believe in truth because we will it to be. The will allows us to overcome unwillingness, due to a weak reason or a defective will, if there are sacrifices to be made, the will rises to the occasion. Truth does not impose itself on us from the geometric evidence of rationality. Ollé-Laprune maintains that there is in the unity of the spirit an aspect of faith, an infallible certitude of the truth. Ollé-Laprune writes,

La certitude est morale, non en ce sens vulgaire où ce qui est moralement certain est ce qui est très probable, ou tout au plus ce qui est fondé sur le témoignage des hommes et plus généralement sur ces lois constantes découvertes par l'observation de coeur humain. La certitude morale dont nous parlons est plus et mieux que cela: elle est dite morale parce qu'elle dépend de dispositions proprement morales. Elle est tout ensemble assentiment de la raison et consentement de la volonté; elle est savoir et foi.²²¹

Finally, Ollé-Laprune ends with his affirmation that moral certitude is both transcendent and immanent.²²²

Before going on to the section on Blondel we need to recapitulate what we have covered of the historical antecedent to Blondel and conclude as to its significance. We started off by signaling the importance of the Kantian legacy that infiltrated into France. This legacy was problematic not just for Catholic thought but also for philosophy as well. This is important because Blondel's work was philosophy in the service of a Catholic faith.

The reaction to Kant, therefore, involved two streams of thought, one leading into Boutroux and the other into Ollé-Laprune, and both were the teachers and direct mentors to Blondel. The Boutroux stream was the spiritualist school of philosophy which begins with Maine de Biran and is followed by Renouvier and Lachelier while the stream of Ollé-Laprune begins with Bautain and follows into Gratry, followed by Ollé-Laprune himself. Both streams reacted to the Kantian legacy and tried to find a way out of the problematics bequeathed by Kant: the problem of ethics for philosophy and the problem of method for Catholic theology.

These two streams provided Blondel with both a content and a form. The content contained all the elements found in the spiritualist school of philosophy: the relation between spontaneity and mechanism, the relation between efficient cause and final cause, the notion of habit, a hierarchy of being, the relation between spirit and nature etc.... The form contained the elements of the method of

apologetics that anticipates the modern analyses of intentionality and the a priori significance of that intentionality: the role of the will in matters of faith, the three-fold nature of man (body/reason/intellect), the dialectic of induction etc.... Blondel learnt his history of philosophy and theology well. He would leave nothing aside, everything had to be integrated and be accounted for. At the same time Catholic thought had to be brought into line with the modern world, with modern thought. It is in the wake of the nineteenth-century that Blondel's L'Action (1893) must be viewed as a pivotal shift in modern Catholic thought.

CHAPTER III

FOUNDATIONS

Method

Spinoza and the Problem of Becoming

It can be stated at the outset that Blondel's starting point revolves around a methodological issue that comes out of Spinoza's philosophy.¹ Blondel certainly admired Spinoza's attempt to resolve the specific problem of human destiny within the context of a "total philosophy".² Accepting the problematic of Spinoza, Blondel wished to construct an ethic in the tradition of Spinoza whose purpose was to "unify all the sciences to one unique end ... in order to arrive at the perfection of man".³ From this perspective, Blondel was able to pinpoint three elements related to Spinoza's thought. First, that Spinoza was the first in modern times to pose under a radical form the principle that the human spirit can find within himself alone all truths necessary for life. Secondly, this very idea of Spinoza can deploy itself in order to envelop more diverse and plural forms of thought and life and that it can absorb heterogeneous elements in order to resuscitate itself in original systems. Thirdly, the result of Spinoza's

thought is that the notion of immanence becomes the basis and the very condition of philosophy which, if carried fully, requires transcendental truths.⁴

The question can be asked: How did Spinoza in his Ethics arrive at his point of destiny? There is in Spinoza a preliminary, or what one can call an a priori analytical regression. There is a secret finality which governs implicitly, or invisibly, the deductive and synthetic progress of his thought and Blondel saw the primum movens of Spinoza's work as being the attempt to resolve the problem of human destiny by reason alone.⁵ It is this "reason alone" that Blondel considers to be the most damaging aspect of Spinoza's entire enterprise, in other words, the method. Blondel understood Spinoza's Ethics to be a study of phenomenon which mistook itself for a metaphysics. Spinoza's phenomenal moral investigation differs from Blondel's L'Action (1893) because it reverses the order of procedure.⁶

For Spinoza the moral problem must impose its own unity. Truth brings its own solution in the sense that adequate thinking constitutes destiny. The result is an absolute monism. Everything that becomes is subordinated to the moral problem and this problem of human destiny is the ultimate concern. Therefore, in this manner ethics reveals its ontological character.⁷ Thus in Spinoza the moral problem has absorbed the problem of metaphysics and vice

versa. From this viewpoint, Blondel asks whether the particular solution to the human problem is not included in the universal truth, in the same manner that the part resides in the whole.¹⁰ Again, Blondel sees the merit of Spinoza as being the attempt to recover, by reason, this universal truth which grounds our being. Spinoza does this by showing us, under the guise of necessity and eternity, the truth, the good, and happiness. The solution to human destiny is not to be invented but to be discovered and recognized. Therefore it is an intellectual solution that carries the practical problem, that is, understanding is the instrument of salvation. The moral solution is to reintegrate ourselves in the universal whole which also envelops all forms of thought and action. Blondel points out that Spinoza considered that the aim of divine thought was to constitute within itself individuals and in addition to this, that divine thought knows itself only through individuals. Thus Delbos interprets Spinoza to mean that there is consubstantial to the "God who is from all eternity" a "God who from all eternity becomes".¹¹ This means that not only is our morality our life but that it is also God's life. In this way the problem of man becomes an element of the divine problem. Hence, by making morality the explication of everything, Spinoza resolves morality in metaphysics. By projecting man in God Spinoza succeeds in putting the divine in man. Again, to abolish being from the

relative, Spinoza puts the relative in the absolute. To escape from the absolute of becoming, Spinoza cannot escape from the necessity of positing the becoming of the divine.¹¹ As Blondel sees it, the problem with Spinoza is his pretention to solve the problem of being and life by the sole effort of the understanding, by excluding anthropomorphic determinations of sensibility and consciousness. To be sure, Spinoza had introduced into philosophy the notion of salvation. From here it is easy to note the significance of Spinoza's philosophy for the subsequent follow-up of German Idealism, because if it is true that man is capable of happiness, then truth must, for us, be identical with the truth in us.¹² In short, Spinoza's pantheism is really a "pananthropism".¹³

Blondel sees the development of German Idealism as an outcome of Spinoza's thinking and Blondel summarizes that development in this way: elaborate the idea of becoming in being; stretch this notion of being to the entire field of history; put into light this principle of becoming and join to the doctrine of absolute intelligibility the philosophy of Spirit or Idea.¹⁴ Thus the problem of human destiny that Spinoza had envisaged became metamorphosized. This occurred through the powerful efforts of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Hence, the emergence of Kant's subjectivism was like a mishap.¹⁵

Blondel believes that no two books on ethics

contrast more sharply than Spinoza's Ethics and Kant's Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals. Spinoza finds the solution in the infinite object while Kant finds it in the free activity of the subject. With Kant, the concern is with what we ought to be, with the moral absolute of freedom and self-autonomy. With Spinoza, we have the reintegration of the individual with the all and the envelopment of morality in the universal determinism. For Kant everything refers to reason considered as an autonomous legislative faculty; nothing refers to Being. Spinoza reduces everything analytically to the idea of duty and morality. Kant subordinates everything to the idea of duty and morality in order to assume the autonomy of the will. In Spinoza we have the free march and the synthetic progress of action while in Kant we have the development of analytical thought and the determinism of science. Spinoza begins with the infinite object which envelops all modes of thought and reality while Kant relates everything to the subject. Yet both propose the solution to the ethical problem. In short, their blueprint tends to explain, reduce and produce in us that "becoming" which constitutes our human role and our moral destiny. Therefore Blondel easily saw that there is an antithetical relation between Kant's moral philosophy and Kant's ethics. In Spinoza, Blondel noticed the methodological problem which in the course of time would determine the course of modern philosophy. The "seed"

implanted by Spinoza would reach its fruition in Hegel and this was made possible by the antithetical nature of Spinoza and Kant.¹⁴ As it is pointed out by Blondel:

... mais avant de fondre en une synthèse rationnelle tous ces éléments qui semblaient plutôt sortir du Spinozisme qu'y rentrer, la philosophie germanique devait se retremper dans la grande épreuve de la critique Kantienne. Il fallait que ce qui était demeuré comme l'envers du Spinozisme devint l'endroit d'un nouveau système, et que le postulat secret de l'Ethique fut pris pour le principe même d'une doctrine originale, afin que chacun des penseurs antagonistes ayant révélé tout son sens, la conciliation put se faire et l'unité systématique de l'une et de l'autre put s'achever.¹⁵

While Spinoza's Ethics begins with the affirmation of the infinite substance or object while denying the distinct reality of a moral subject apart from that object, Kant begins with the consciousness of obligation on the part of the free subject and denies the possibility of theoretical knowledge of the infinite object. The conflict between Spinoza and Kant was viewed by Blondel to rest on contradictory methodological principles.²⁰ Blondel recognized the entire Kantian enterprise resting on what Kant had termed the "Copernican revolution", that is, the assumption that objects must conform to our knowledge.²¹ From this Kant took up an agnostic position with regards to the "thing-in-itself". This readily conflicted with Spinoza's principle that "the order and connection of ideas is identical with the order and connection of things".²² For Kant ideas are a priori constructions which by their very nature cannot lead to theoretical knowledge of the

"order and connections of things-in-themselves". The schemata of the issues are as follows:

Theme	Spinoza	Kant
Starting point in moral philosophy	infinite object	subject
Moral ideal	Total conformity of mind with its object	Conformity of mind with itself (with its consciousness of duty or rational law)
Philosophical position	Total identity of moral philosophy and metaphysics	Dichotomy between theoretical reason and practical reason (i.e. between morality and metaphysics)
Object of moral philosophy	Being (already fully determined)	Not what is but what ought to be
Moral process	Reintegrating into total being	Exercise of liberty with autonomous will
Essence of moral process	Contained within the universal determinism of the absolute object	Contained within the free activity of the subject
Phenomena or what is apparent in moral activity	Freedom	Determination
Illusion	Synthetic process of human activity	Development of analytic reason, and determinism of science

Blondel maintains that,

... dans la doctrine du Kantisme, tout semble se rapporter à la raison considérée comme faculté législatrice et autonome; rien ne semble se rapporter à l'Être, surtout à l'Être tel que le Spinozisme l'a défini sous forme de chose éternelle. Dans l'univers

comme le conçoit Spinoza, tout s'accomplit sous une loi d'identité à la fois intellectuelle et naturelle, de telle sorte qu'il n'y a pas de devoir, mais un développement dans l'Être. Pour Kant, au contraire il s'agit, non pas de savoir ce qu'est l'Être, mais de déterminer les lois de ce qui arrive et de ce qui est à faire. Or, dans la science et dans la vie, rien n'arrive, rien ne se fait que par synthèse.~

Blondel summarizes the conflict by stating that..

Spinoza se propose donc de réduire analytiquement l'idée même du devoir et de la moralité à laquelle Kant subordonne tout pour assurer l'autonomie du vouloir. Pour le premier c'est la marche libre et le progrès synthétique de l'action; pour le second c'est le développement de la pensée analytique et le déterminisme de la science qui est l'apparence ou le phénomène.~

In the eyes of Blondel both doctrines resemble each other more than they contradict each other. Therefore, as Blondel sees it, both are partial aspects of the total moral philosophy. What their opposition does is simply emphasize the contrary aspects of a higher synthesis. This is because they both wish to solve the ethical problem of human life. They both do this by explaining the process of "becoming" which is the manifestation of our moral destiny.~ McNeill says that these systems constitute an inconsistent monism and that each system survives at the expense of secretly borrowing from the other. Blondel sees the common idea of both systems as being the idea that man can succeed by his own powers to reintegrate himself into the absolute. But because Kant's subjective moral autonomy and Spinoza's objective moral determinism are contrary aspects of the same total philosophy Blondel believed them both to be guilty of the same error, namely, exclusive rationalism.~

Blondel's criticism of Kant revolved around Kant's idea of a formal autonomy of reason and its independence of any 'given', because, according to Blondel, one cannot isolate oneself in the purity of autonomous reason. As such, an intelligent relation is impossible between the law of autonomous practical reason and the material object of the will.²² It was a false conception of freedom, maintains Blondel, that allowed Kant such a position. McNeill summarizes the problematic in this way:

If it is true that the universal determinism of the objective rational order of Spinoza's system demanded a secret supposition of free human activity and a principle of becoming, it is also true that the autonomous reason of Kant is incapable of establishing a concrete moral philosophy without presupposing a rational order present in the objective order of being
.....²³

Spinoza's failure to build a consistent philosophy on the exclusive realist premise of the objective identity of thought and being was matched by Kant's failure of an exclusive critical philosophy based on the irreducible dualism of thought and being.²⁴ Blondel maintains that these two illusions (realist and critical idealist) are deceiving in the sense that both attempt to erect a system based on one of these tendencies while excluding the other. Blondel believed that the realist-idealist problematic should be transcended and that he could do it.

Therefore it is safe to say at this point that Blondel's starting point and method would be to transcend the artificial opposition of realism and idealism.²⁵ This

entailed an integration of what was necessary and true in each doctrine into a higher synthesis. In another way of putting it, Blondel's L'Action (1893) was to redefine the relation of reason and practice, thought and being. As Blondel concludes in L'Action (1893),

Montrer le caractère chimérique et superstitieux de toute tentative faite pour fonder directement une morale capable de se suffire et de constituer une science autonome, voilà la conclusion d'une telle recherche. Point de conception fermée du devoir qui vaille par elle-même et qui constitue le bien par des préceptes tout formels. Point non plus de vérité spéculative dont la vue adéquate fasse la vie parfaite. Ni le problème éthique ni le problème métaphysique ne saurait jamais être résolu seul. Pas de morale hors de la vérité; mais la vérité comprise n'est pas, par elle seule, la morale même. Le secret de la vie est plus haut que Kant ou Spinoza ne l'ont vu.³⁴

The issue for Blondel was to clarify that problematic generated by what can be called "the subjectivist illusion", namely the pretension that philosophy was capable of giving the final verdict as to what constituted human destiny, that philosophy was the absolute final point by which life was to be measured. In what way did Blondel view the intellectualist illusion as dangerous and erroneous?

Here we can point out that Blondel identified three specific forms of the generic intellectualist illusion, namely, that ability to understand totally and possess completely absolute being by the sole means of a philosophical system.³⁵ The three are: 1) Objective realism represented by Spinoza is the belief in the absolute objective identity of thought and being. 2) the critical

illusion represented by Kant establishes the dichotomy between thought and being. 3) the subjectivist illusion represented by German Idealism maintains the subjective identity of thought and being. In the last instance, Blondel recognizes that German Idealism transposed the conflict of subject and object into the heart of the subject. On the other hand, Blondel's thesis project was originally intended in this way:

Entre l'aristotelisme qui deprecie et subordonne la pratique a la pensee et le kantisme qui les detache et exalte l'ordre pratique au detriment de l'autre, il y a quelque chose a definir, et c'est d'une maniere tres concrete, par l'analyse de l'action, que je voudrais determiner cela.

Elsewhere Blondel states that,

Entre la doctrine ancienne, selon laquelle la volonte agit conformement a un objet, au point de ne plus faire qu'un avec lui et le kantisme qui place la volonte en dehors et au-dessus de la raison, il y a sans doute quelque chose a definir: il demeure vrai que pour bien agir, il faut bien penser: il est encore plus vrai peut-etre de dire que pour bien penser, il faut bien agir. In optibus lux.

Hence, Blondel saw that while critical philosophy clarified the artificial character of the object of reflection, it nonetheless did not escape in conferring an ontological value to a specific kind of knowledge. It was to become a new form of rationalism, one which would confer ontological value on artificial abstractions. This exclusive moralism in which the practical and the speculative knowledge are separated is meaningless. The critical process is artificial knowledge, but trapped within

its thought, within its limits, it can only criticize ideas. What Blondel saw was needed was a new point of view which would allow and account for a simultaneous criticism of both practical and speculative reason.⁴¹

Blondel's opening lines in L'Action (1893) go directly to the heart of the human problem and sets the stage and direction of an ethical concern that is total and all-encompassing:

Où ou non, la vie humaine a-t-elle un sens, et l'homme a-t-il une destinée? J'agis, mais sans même savoir ce qu'est l'action, sans avoir souhaité de vivre, sans connaître au juste ni qui je suis ni même si je suis. Cette apparence, d'être qui s'agite en moi, ces actions légères et fugitives d'une ombre, j'entends dire qu'elles portent en elles une responsabilité éternellement lourde, et que, même au prix du sang, je ne puis acheter le néant parce que pour moi il n'est plus: je serais donc condamné à la vie, condamné à la mort, condamné à l'éternité! Comment et de quel droit, si je ne l'ai ni su ni voulu?⁴²

In the thick of life man asks himself, one day, why he must bear the brunt of the demands of life and death, without ever having asked to be born, not knowing even who he really is nor what constitutes his destiny. Man senses the need to discover what is hidden in his acts where he undergoes being and becomes connected to being. One needs to take stock of the immediate evidence, that is, the facticity of action. This facticity of action expresses within man a universal determinism which is produced without one's own will. Thus life is an exigency; it is an obligation that demands total commitment.

Life carries us ahead and demands that we go along

otherwise life goes on without us, sometimes against us.

Whether we will it or not action determines our destiny.

Either action takes place upon us, turning us into victims

of the past or action of our own initiative enslaves us to

the necessity of the future and its responsibilities. No one

escapes action. One merely raises the problem and resolves

it for "every action is an irreversible commitment". We

are caught in the web of existence.⁴¹ The problem of life

is that everything dominates and oppresses the will and at

the same time the will desires to dominate everything. From

these comments we can see how Blondel came to view

philosophy's concern to be nothing short of action because

action, on the one hand, appears tyrannical, exerting

tremendous obligations yet its necessity is inevitable. Life

demandes action and is constituted by action. The center of

philosophy must be transported into action because that is

where there exists the center of life.⁴² Action is a

manifestation of the double will of man: spontaneity and

reflection.⁴³ Therefore, Blondel translates the problem of

human destiny into the problem of action: Is there a problem

of action? If so, what is the problem of action?

Critique of Nihilism

In the first part of L'Action (1893), Blondel takes up the problem of action in a dialogue against the view that we saw expressed in the latter stages of the nineteenth-century just at the time when Blondel was writing the thesis, namely, the immoral positions of the dilettante and the nihilist.⁴⁷

For the dilettante life is such a burden, a tyrannical obligation that he wonders why he should even bother with the question of the meaning of life. For the dilettante there is no moral problem but Blondel reminds us here that any negative viewpoint is still a standpoint in itself. The dilettante however believes that to be duped without knowing it is the misfortune of the passionate and the committed. The dilettante maintains that the only solution is to be duped knowingly, to lend oneself to the illusion, enjoying everything as a joke, annihilating oneself with erudition and delight. By equating thought and feeling with universal vanity one fills oneself with more emptiness and after a joyful existence returns to the peaceful bliss of the Unconsciousness. Such is the position of the dilettante as Blondel sees it.⁴⁸

Blondel, in imitating Kant's division of reason, reduces subjective annihilation into two attitudes or approaches, one theoretical and the other practical. The speculative dilettante maintains the position that all

contradictions are simultaneously true; he cannot possibly desire to resolve. In this narrow and arrogant attitude Blondel takes notice of a "trap into which philosophical systems fall. This is the game-playing of the childish kind that poses as the idealist, the positivist, or the transcendental metaphysician knowing that every system really begs the question. An example of this would be that we know that the Unknown cannot be known. The gamemaster experiences all in order to deny all, like Penelope, says Blondel, who weaves, by day and unravels by night, the garment of a god who never will be."⁴⁵ The theoretical dilettante's mental gymnastics solves everything because everything is nothing. Life is a phantasm to be enjoyed because it escapes our grasp.

Theoretical reason, sooner or later, turns to practical life. The calculated dialectic of contradictions becomes an uninhibited experimentation on the level of action and sensation.⁴⁶ On this level, one lives contradictions rather than think them. Thus, by practicing contradictions, one becomes adept at dissolving the moral problem. At this point the living dilettante no longer needs to be occupied with the question of human destiny. Blondel likens this to the solution which corresponds to a mechanization of one's soul in order to produce all possible emotions and agitate the most interesting and passing enthusiasms. Life becomes a self-liquidation through the

experiences of practical skepticism - "an essayism in action".³¹ One frolics with life. Man and his destiny becomes a hoax. The dilettante wills nothing, seeks nothing and believes in nothing, all in the service of perpetual freedom. Therefore in both cases, in theory and in practice, the epicurean dilettante keeps the same approach to the problem of life's meaning.

This attitude, or the dilettante, says Blondel, is voluntary and therefore cannot constitute a solution within its premise because, behind this nolo velle (non-willing) or esthetism with its subjective and objective annihilation there is a secret desire to self-realization, to panegoism.³² The esthete's entire enterprise consists of escaping or obscuring a problem he very well knows exists. After all, a deliberate ignorance is not ignorance. In this very negation the esthete displays a voluntary duplicity. The phrase "I do not will to will", nolo velle translates into "I will not to will", volo nolle. Hence, the sense of an absence of will implies the idea of a will that does not will, in other words, a will that abdicates. To the esthete, looking at everything from a lofty and above ego, everything becomes petty. All that remains is self-love of one alone. The tacit understanding is that there is nothing before me, nothing after me, nothing outside of me. The aphorism that is apt to describe the situation of the esthete is as follows: nothing is other, therefore I am.³³ To will

nothing is to turn away from everything in order to remsin everything to oneself, alone transcendent to everything.³⁴

One wills in order that being be, yet it is a pleasure to be in order to deny being. Blondel writes,

Esprit et matiere, ou à un autre point de vue, sujet et objet ne sont rien l'un sans l'autre et ne sont rien l'un pour l'autre. Pour se produire, le sujet devient objet, sans qu'il le soit primitivement, mais il n'est objet que pour soi; il est néant pout tout ce qui est hors de lui. Le tout subjectif est donc néant objectif, et inversement, sans que la solidarite cesse jamais entre les deux termes incompatibles; ils ne se peuvent jamais annuler complètement ni réaliser purement, bien qu'ils y tendent par approximations progressives, en oscillant du neant au tout dans les ondulations infinitesimales de la conscience.³⁵

In this way it puts God everywhere but in God, that is, God is placed nowhere. After doing this it restores God to Himself that is, to everything. The esthete can take refuge in the nothingness of the self or the object, the senses or the mind. The dialectician can dance through every position because, as dilettante, he is master of every position and counterposition - this is his freedom.³⁶

Blondel argues that it is acts that discloses the internal contradiction of the will and the moral failure of the dilettante.³⁷ Either the dilettante gives in to the elan of sincerity and love of self thus persevering in his will for the purpose of emancipation and absolute sovereignty or holds on to an attitude that does not correspond to his most sincere will by holding himself in this position by a contrary will. Blondel maintains that this negation could not be maintained were it not made up

of a two-fold contrary will.³⁰ The hidden contradiction is a battle between the voluntary (le volontaire) and the willed (le Voulu).³¹ Acts manifest, says Blondel, true accord or discord between the double will, the voluntary and the willed.³²

When these two wills are at odds with each other, acts will always show which will is willed, which will is manifested. Blondel says that action draws its character from the willed-will, it realizes without being grounded on the primitive willing it perverts.³³ The first movement of the immanent will is disclosed in the very effort the dilettante makes to go on escaping "in order to be and to be more than all, alone or all".³⁴ But beneath the dilettante's indifference there exists a willing of self.³⁵ In addition to this, Blondel states that we cannot, from a subjective point of view, suppress the will, nolle (not-to-will) without immediately assigning nothingness to it as object and goal. What is nothing for the senses, is everything for the mind and vice versa. The objects of the senses diminishes in proportion to the growth of the egoism of the dilettante.³⁶ The dilettante takes pleasure in the phenomenon in order to experience the nothingness of things or he acts to elevate himself in the nothingness of the self. What is taking place, suggests Blondel, is that the life that the dilettante practices is the opposition of the two wills and the price of this moral

duplicity is that the voluntary contradictions of actions become the necessary contradictions of suffering.²³ The moral problem of human destiny, or as Blondel puts it, the problem of action, for the dilettante, does not exist. But as Blondel points out we simply cannot do away with being and acting. To will nothing is at the same time to admit being.²⁴ Therefore man really has no choice but to will and to pursue an end. But what end? Nothingness?

Somerville's comment serves to clarify the question.

To will nothing is to will the self, and to will the self is to implicate in this affirmation the reality of everything that is needed for the self to be a subject. There is no way of enjoying being in the shelter of nothingness. Something always survives.

After the argument with the nihilist position Blondel, next, takes up the argument against those who claim that nothingness is the correct conclusion, the goal of science and the end of human ambition. For the majority of people, it is safe to say that action constitutes a system of spontaneous or willed movement, that is, it is a way of putting the organism into motion, using, in a determined way, one's energy in the interest of some pleasure or interest under the influence of a need, idea, or even a dream.²⁵ But life, it may be said, is cruel; it is found wanting. Why will anything? To will anything, merely keeps desire alive, therefore, the solution is simply to will nothing.²⁶ By this solution to the problem of action destroys the will-to-be. The conclusion of this position

suggests that there is nothing in our acts. Science also reaches this same conclusion because, to know is for nothing, because all that science tells us is that ultimate reality is not known. Science cannot give absolute answers or reasons for action, nor can science account for it, nor justify it, nor posit it as real and necessary."

The pessimist knows that the sensual life leads to disenchantment. He also knows that science has reduced man to a bundle of energies and that science only increases our knowledge of nothingness. The belief is that science does not know beyond what appears. Therefore the solution of the pessimist occurs when he can eliminate his every desire to find more in life than what he experiences as phenomenon. Blondel says that just as nothingness of life was the conclusion of the senses, experience, and science, so too is nothingness of action a conclusion of "metaphysical criticism".

Blondel believed that it was the great achievement of Critical philosophy to have brought to light the conflicts between speculative reason and practical reason. But for Blondel, action pertains to all the powers in man, alien and hostile to one another. Through thought action is of an intellectual order while through intention it belongs to the moral order and through execution it belongs to the world of science. But critical philosophy, sees Blondel, gave us a division of determinism and freedom, phenomenon,

noumenon, the result of which the will to live is shattered from the will to think.⁷⁵ Against this dichotomy Blondel asserts that the problem of life is a question of metaphysics, of morality, and of science all at once.

Action, therefore, is the synthesis of willing, knowing, and being.⁷⁶ Action is the precise point where the world of thought, the moral world, and the world of science converge. Where they do not unite, and they do not in critical philosophy, then they come apart. If there is no solidarity among the three then there is nothing. As Blondel declares, from the day criticism broke up the unity of action, pessimism took on the form of a system and has forever upheld the flag of nothingness.⁷⁷

The will, when stripped of its illusions comes back to its essence. As it dies to the world of passion and egoism it is born again to a new being - it engenders itself through willful destruction and the abnegation of the self. It is the tendency, of course, of every being to maintain its struggle for survival. It preserves itself to maintain nothingness. It becomes the illusion of an illusion.⁷⁸ Since the will to be is not to succeed in being and since the will-not-to-be brings liberation, what the pessimists call for is the destruction of the will to be an end and to consent to non-being, in short, to destroy once and for all the roots of desire and the love of life.⁷⁹ Therefore to unmask the deceit of the life instinct is to procure

salvation for the pessimist. This kind of salvation is seen by Blondel as the absence of willing.²⁰ Thus Blondel argues that nothingness of sensible life, nothingness of scientific research, nothingness of philosophical speculation, nothingness of moral activity is the universal conclusion and the only end to which pessimism leads in order to destroy the deceiving appearance of reality and the unhappy desire for existence.²¹ This is the very negative solution that Blondel argues against.

Blondel himself believes that the artificial conception of nothingness and the desire for nothingness derive from an inconsistency and a deficiency in willed action.²² According to Blondel this can be asserted by sorting out the internal contradictions of what can be called nihilism and by uncovering the secret movements of a sincere will in those who, in the name of experience, science, and metaphysical criticism, willfully believe and willfully aspire to nothingness.²³

Blondel raises the question as to what it is that allows the man of the senses and the man of science to affirm the nothingness of man. What is the tacit premise? Blondel answers that it is the idea of, and the need for a better satisfaction and reality than the one already experienced.²⁴ To deny something substantial which one actually experiences cannot lead to a legitimate denial of an infinite that escapes from one's experience. It is the

ever-receding mystery that brings awe and wonder to Pascal, not a void. The nihilist, however, is unable to find his "all" in phenomena and therefore, concludes that there is nothing. But within the nothingness of appearance there looms something more than what appears. The contradiction is simply this: one wills nothing when what one really wills is more.¹⁰ What does it mean to believe and to aspire to the nothingness of every object of thought or desire? Blondel answers,

... c'est, par un aveu et un acte de foi spontanée, qui dépasse la science par une décision originale qui manifeste l'initiative de la volonté, avouer ce Grand Tout dont aiment à parler ceux-là surtout qui se promettent l'aneantissement. Tout et Néant pour eux, deux termes équivalents.¹¹

Again, elsewhere Blondel states,

Ainsi la volonté qui se porte à l'aneantissement de la personne humaine, se fonde, qu'elle le sache ou non, elle-même sur une estime singulière et un amour absolu de l'être.¹²

At the moment that the dilettante declares the insufficiency of the phenomenon, he becomes attached to it as if it were the only solid and real being. One persists in being content with what thought and desire recognized to be vain, disappointing, and null.

Blondel points to the conflict at hand, between the primitive will for nothingness and an appetite for phenomenon steering the will to the very place from where it had excluded itself, namely being. Blondel poses the dilemma:

Vouloir ainsi le néant, sous les mots dont on se leurre, c'est en effet rendre témoignage et à la vanité de ce qu'on donne comme aliment à l'action, et la sincérité du premier et intime desir: mensonge, parce qu'on abuse d'une équivoque; on ne veut pas, on ne peut pas nier à la fois le phénomène et l'être; et pourtant, selon les besoins, on les nie tour à tour comme cette alternative même on les pose également.⁸⁸

Blondel, however, affirms that pessimism promotes a tremendous confidence in the omnipotence of the will because the will appears as both necessary and sufficient to create the anguish of existence as well as the redemptive annihilation.⁸⁹ What is important for Blondel and what is the crux of Blondel's argument is that ultimately in willing-to-be, in willing-not-to-be, in willing-not-to-will there subsists that common term willing.⁹⁰ Blondel tells us that the pessimist gets lost in insoluble contradictions because he proceeds from a double willing, namely, the willing of the phenomenon and the willing of being. As he puts it,

... comme si la volonté était tantôt le phénomène, ici se mettant au-dessus et en dehors du tout, là se subordonnant passivement aux illusions et aux atteintes extérieures!⁹¹

There always exists a contradiction because some may deny the phenomenon through the pure idea they have of being while others deny being through the obsessive image they have of

the phenomenon. At bottom, they never succeed in objective annihilation. It does not really matter whether one wills not to will or will to will nothing, the one a subjective form of annihilation, the other, an objective form of annihilation.²² The pessimist, without a doubt, speaks of nothingness as if it were a datum. The problem, Blondel points out, is that nothingness is an idea. As the subject intends towards that idea of nothingness, he plunges into an ever-receding mystery. One pretends to will nothingness when one is merely willing more. One's notion of being is so elevated that phenomena fails to qualify as being, simply, because the will sees itself as a being. This illusion of one's own being is destroyed by willing not to will. Thus the dialectic is that the pessimist affirms his own being and the being of everything in order to deny them.²³ One cannot deny the existence of being without first experiencing that very existence of being. To do so entails denying only what one had previously affirmed. If nothing existed a priori, then any denying would never have to take place. The very act of denying implies some sort of being.²⁴ The will always, in the end, wills that which it wishes to deny or exclude. Somerville comments that "just as the idea of nothing presupposes the idea of being, so the will for nothing, as well as the nothingness of the will, presuppose the reality and being of the will and its object".²⁵ Ultimately, one is always willing.

Here Blondel concludes that the problem of action cannot be solved by a negation.⁹⁷ There is a need to attribute some kind of being to both subject and the world of phenomena that it encounters. There, as Blondel strongly insists, there is "something" - "il y a quelque chose".⁹⁸ Once the route of nothingness is closed there are then two possible roads left open: the way of phenomenon, the life of the senses or the way of being, the life of sacrifice.⁹⁹ Once this is admitted then there opens up the sensible, scientific, moral and social orders.¹⁰⁰ The realization is that there is "something" which is prior, foreign and consequent to the will. What remains to be seen is whether this "something" or this action is to be restricted to phenomena. What we will, therefore, is that there be "something" and that it be self-sufficient. We want the phenomena to be, we want sense-life and we want science.¹⁰¹ This is the affirmation that arises when the road of nothingness is closed. The attitude is changed. At this point, the converted pessimist will want the immensity of the universe known. Yet behind the screen of phenomenon there lies the hope that life will be lucid, complete and satisfying, the reversal of that feeling that the pessimist had felt prior to the admission that there is "something".¹⁰²

The dialectical method has now passed on to the affirmation that "there is something" in our actions,

sensations, pleasures, knowledge and in our acts. What Blondel has done is shift from the pessimist's viewpoint to that of the optimist. It is safe to say, along with Blondel, that most people live with this optimist conviction, who have never entertained the viewpoints of the dilettante or the nihilist with the consequent accompaniment of the feelings of pessimism. This conviction of optimism is that of naive consciousness which comes prior to any profession of phenomenalism, criticism or idealism. But it must be pointed out that Blondel is careful not to give metaphysical status to this "something."¹⁰ The question is raised as to whether reality begins and ends with the senses and that everything else (science, consciousness, freedom, art, society, morality and so forth) is a projection of the mind or a superstructure above physical matter.¹¹ Blondel, to answer this question, will present a phenomenology of action, analyzing those values (science, consciousness, freedom, society etc...) for which men live and die by exposing the underlying dialectic of the double will as it attempts to reach this "something" which has been affirmed.

The Critique of Positivism

In a way that anticipates what will follow we may ask the question: Can the values for which men will and desire equal the will's plan? Can the order of phenomena equal and satisfy a deeper will? Blondel answers by reminding

us that man can never become what he wants to become and what he wants to be because nothing in the objective order can equal the will's needs.¹⁰⁷ This is why the will never ceases to will. By exploring the phenomena of willing, Blondel will show that at each level of life is self-transcending and that each synthesis is an end for what is below and a means for what is above. What this means is that there is a hierarchy of means for the unfolding and expansion of a deeper will. It is important to note here that according to Blondel the problem of human destiny is solved only when man "freely wills all that he necessarily wills".¹⁰⁸

Blondel maintains that in the order of phenomena and in the sciences, the ontological distinctions between being and knowing makes no sense. This is because the phenomena is at the same time something known and something knowing.¹⁰⁹ Blondel is concerned with showing how the subject results from the object and how the subject returns to act and live in the object. For this Blondel says that there is an inconsistency between sensation and scientific activity. A question is posed: why did not man stay happy or contented with his first given of life, namely sense intuition? Why did the necessity and need of science arise? To what secret desire does this recurring desire correspond? Why does the will will science?¹¹⁰

Blondel states that behind brute sensations we are

led by a natural movement to search for what it is. As long as we take sensation for the object itself no speculative curiosity is awakened. This occurs only when we notice the conflict of individual tastes and through reflection that the idea arises that what we sense is not the only true, the total reality of what we sense. The perennial search for universal principles behind phenomena attests to this characteristic feature of the disjunction between appearance and knowledge of what appears. Once another knowledge is discerned beneath sensation a natural need for a hidden being to be discovered is felt. What one cannot perceive, one imagines through analogy. As it was shown by Hume and Kant objects are constituted by the synthetic action of a subject. Therefore there is something more in phenomena. To see what is implied in the positive sciences Blondel looks at the order of objective phenomena. But science is a creation of the subject. Therefore it becomes imperative to Blondel that the role of the subject and its action be explored. But first Blondel asks whether mathematical deduction can be linked to the facts of experience since it seems to grasp nature simultaneously from both ends.¹⁰⁹ Blondel maintains that between the mathematical and the experimental sciences there is at once a break and a solidarity and this tacit collaboration or this unity of the sciences is possible only through a mediation on which they depend. This mediation is brought about by action.¹¹⁰

Blondel argues that "there is ... in science... a manifest duality" and that "these two methods are equally complete and self-sufficient"¹¹³ Both use analysis and synthesis where on the one hand "action is an integration whose rigorous formula a perfect calculus would provide" while for the other "action is a sui generis fact whose originality no mathematical approximation reveals and which like every other synthesis, can be known only by direct observation"¹¹⁴ Blondel's criticism of positivism is stated:

La conception positiviste, la conception aujourd'hui dominante selon laquelle les sciences s'enchaîneraient en une série unilinéaire selon un ordre de complication croissante est donc radicalement erronée"¹¹⁵

Blondel believes however that inside each scientific disciplines (the procedures of calculus or experience) is hidden a discordance and an accord not justified by science. In each of these sciences reveals both the same incoherence and the same solidarity. Each owes its success to tacit and indirect borrowings. What Blondel tries to show is what is transcendent to them in the positive sciences is that very "something" that makes them possible. According to Blondel "each had a sort of independence or self-sufficiency, we would have... to be content with even its provisional successes"¹¹⁶ But its imperfections do not come from the defects of results (which is always partial) but "from nature itself of the truths it reaches and the method it uses".¹¹⁷ What Blondel wishes to say is that the operation of

mathematics and the experiential sciences is the same as that of moral activity. Blondel explains,

... "car c'est parce qu'elles ont pour fin un intérêt pratique et une opération efficace, que ces sciences surgissent du fond même de notre activité et s'organisent spontanément sous l'empire de la même loi intérieure qui préside à toute notre vie. Ainsi les mathématiques même apparaîtront comme une forme du développement du vouloir: elles rentreront dans la série des moyens que nous employons pour résoudre le problème de l'action; elles deviendront, dans la connaissance savante que nous aurons de nos actes, ce qu'elles sont dans la réalité vivante de nos opérations, un élément de la solution."

But, where is the connection made on which all positive certitude depends? True, mathematical analysis never reaches sensible reality at the end of its abstractions while, by the same token, direct observations never make scientific the concrete by inserting quantitative determinations gathered from the intuition of the senses. Therefore, as a concluding remark, Blondel is able to say that neither experience can furnish the pure abstract, nor mathematics the real concrete.¹¹ This is because methodically mathematics rests on the viewpoint that real analysis goes to infinity while experimentation is founded on the belief that mathematics does not produce the real synthesis. But the meaning of unity, analysis and synthesis have different meanings from one science to the next. Science, Blondel tells us, is compromised and no one notices it or is even alarmed by it simply because "the problem is resolved before anyone has to formulate it" because "it is resolved practically" - means to say that "action is not

exhausted in them (sciences), that in supporting them it surpasses and overflows them, that in fostering their growth and their success it proves that there is in them more than the sciences know and attain".¹¹⁰ From here Blondel stipulates that "our power always goes further than our science, because our science, risen from our power, needs that power still to find in its support and its end".¹¹¹ Therefore science cannot limit itself to what it knows because it is already more than it knows.

As such, there is "something" in science that some may wish to dismiss or exclude, but Blondel says that in this "something" there "subsists an irreducible element which, from the viewpoint of the positive sciences remains transcendent without ceasing to be immanent to them".¹²⁰ What we wish to exclude from science is already in it and we can't get along without it. Therefore it is imperative that it be looked at.

Blondel wishes to make this "something" the object of a new science. Blondel's effort will be to determine the unknown and this unknown constitutes the fact that sciences require the mediation of an act that is irreducible to them. What Blondel argues against is the claim that man and his acts can be reduced to phenomena, that very phenomena that positive knowledge determines.¹²¹ Blondel states that "no matter what we do, we shall never live only by scientific ideas".¹²² Blondel firmly states that,

...les sciences ont devant elles une carrière immense et restreinte; et c'est dans ce qu'elles savent que, sans recourir à aucune critique métaphysique, se découvre la certitude de ce qu'elles ne pourront jamais savoir. Elles croîtront indéfiniment sans entamer d'une ligne le mystère qu'elles gardent au coeur: Le temps où il a pu sembler que les mathématiques, la physique ou la biologie avaient une portée proprement philosophique est passé.

Science reveals not only the solidarity and strength but also their weaknesses and lacunae. While science opens up to an unlimited field, an infinite realm is out of their view.

Therefore, from a positivist viewpoint, the problem of life, according to Blondel, is unresolvable.¹¹⁴ This is because the positive sciences are simply "the partial and subaltern expression of an activity that envelops, sustains and overflows them".¹¹⁵ From this result we can anticipate the unfolding of Blondel's concern, namely to determine the bond which maintains scientific continuity, from mathematical knowledge to the facts of consciousness, to ask what are the subjective facts and from that foundation constitute a science of consciousness. This is a shift in concern from the positive science of the object to the positive science of the subject.

Freedom and Determinism

Genesis of the Subject

Having arrived at this point where Blondel concludes that there is "something" that generates the movement of life, such that it underpins the very fabric of the sciences

with the facts of consciousness, we need to determine the "bond" that maintains the continuity. This leads into the science of the subject where the transcendence of these facts will justify the subjective study of action and define the conditions of the science of consciousness. This will initiate an new order of inquiry that Blondel designates as the "moral sciences".¹²⁴ Blondel states that

...dans toute verité scientifique et dans toute realité connue il faut supposer, pour qu'elle soit connue, un principe interne d'unité, un centre de groupement imperceptible aux sens ou à l'imagination mathématique, une opération immanente à la diversité des parties, une idée organique, une action originale qui échappe à la connaissance positive au moment où elle la rend possible, et pour tout dire d'un mot qui a besoin d'être mieux défini, une subjectivité.¹²⁵

Blondel is arguing that scientific truths, psychological facts and metaphysical affirmations are basically, first and foremost, subjectively grounded. But in order to determine what this subjectivity entails, Blondel will examine it from both the outside and the inside, that is, as it appears in the object of knowledge and as it is seen by the subject.¹²⁶ The shift of the inquiry from objective interiority to that of subjective interiority will demonstrate that there is a continuity from the science of the object to the science of the subject. Blondel makes an important point when he says that, although these two orders of knowledge are related and independent of each other, they both follow from one and the same willing.¹²⁷

At this point we can ask the question: how are

phenomena interiorized? Blondel states that the exact sciences recognize "a principle of unity at the heart of the universal solidarity and suppose an invisible bond in the diffuse multiplicity". It is abundantly clear for Blondel that without this unity neither whole nor parts nor relation nor knowledge would be possible. The whole is more than the sum of its parts and the part is more than itself alone because it expresses its relation to the rest.

Therefore in all the hierarchy of organic combinations and forms, systematic unity is designated as the sign of an immanent principle of perception and organization. The

real unity is synthetic and symbolic. It implicitly implies an interior. Phenomena reveals a growing and ever expanding subjectivity. In fact, we can say with Blondel that the phenomenon is neither more nor less a perceiving than it is a perceived. But it is not enough to display the subjective element in scientific truth. What one has to do is "grasp in act the very progress of subjective life".

Blondel maintains that every object known by science is a synthetic unity and this synthesis is more than the multiplicity of its conditions. There is an apparent infinite that is the projection and expression of the infinite interior to every operation of nature or thought. The inside, the interior is the presence of the whole to its parts and of the part to the whole. Parts influence the whole and the whole has a bearing on the parts. Spontaneity

appears. The universe impinges on the organism which in turn synthesizes the chaotic elements according to the whole/part organization already implicit. Thus subjectivity is the synthesis of phenomena.¹³⁴ It constitutes an integration of data and experience. The facts of consciousness is built up. The relation of the subject to the elementary conditions is manifested. The subject adds and contains all the antecedents and the fact of consciousness is thus a product of all the antecedent acts. Facts of consciousness are not isolated from other phenomena and subjective fact is the condition of all the phenomena that are the objects of the positive sciences.

Every synthesis therefore is an originality irreducible to its components. As such, man is immersed in the very phenomena that he wills to have an objective knowledge of. Blondel says that "the subject is scientifically tied to the object and contains it and surpasses it".¹³⁵ Therefore Blondel points out that idealism and realism are equally vain without one another. They are expressions of two orders of solidary facts. It is obvious that Blondel stresses that the subjective fact cannot be defined through a complete knowledge of its antecedents because it constitutes with reference to them an indeterminate synthesis. What is necessary, however, is to take the phenomenon of consciousness in itself and to abstract it from the objective representations it is mixed up with. It is necessary to distinguish the conscious subject

from the elements of his consciousness and from the objects that give it sustenance and what allows it to transubstantiate them and synthesize them.¹²⁰ Again, the subjective, at this point, can be defined as that which constitutes the reality of each synthesis although this is indeterminate and inaccessible to mathematical and sensible knowledge. One cannot reduce action to fact. What this means is that we cannot objectify the subjective and to even imagine that subjectivity is made up of abstract elements. Blondel is adamant on this point - that interior facts are always singular: they are what forms the living synthesis. As such, subjectivity is an individual initiative. Therefore action is to be distinguished from "represented phenomenon".¹²¹

Blondel is quick to point out that "the least act has a reality, an importance, a dignity ... infinitely higher than the fact of the universe"¹²² Therefore what is subjective is not what is conscious and known from the inside but is "what makes the fact of consciousness be: it is the act, internal and always singular, of thought"¹²³ But how can we constitute a science of "becoming"? How do we determine what has neither quantity nor quality since we cannot analyze its elements because the character of each element is modified with each succeeding state? How can one constitute a science of "something" singular and indeterminate which can be neither measured nor represented?

Better still, how can there be a science of "something" when we cannot isolate the elements because in the subject there is constant movement, a constant "becoming"? Blondel states the method of the science of the subject in this manner:

La véritable science du sujet c'est celle qui considérant dès le point de départ l'acte de conscience comme un acte en oeuvre par un progrès continu l'inévitable expansion. Elle cherche l'équation de l'action, c'est-à-dire que se proposant d'en développer tout le contenu, son dessein est de déterminer quel en est le terme nécessaire d'après la force même du mouvement initial d'où procède l'acte et qui se marque à chaque effort de son développement. C'est donc dans l'oeuvre même de la volonté que devront se révéler la loi et la fin au vouloir. Car même là où l'homme semble soumis à des nécessités antécédentes ou subséquentes, ces conditions ne sont encore que des moyens subordonnés à son voeu secret.¹⁴⁰

It is important to note that while man is subject to antecedent and subsequent necessities, these conditions are always subordinate to something secretive, a secret will.

The problematic, therefore, is to determine not what is outside the will, that is, the object, but what is in the will, not what it wills but what it already is by willing.

To summarize, therefore, we can say that the subject arises from phenomena and it distinguishes itself from it which reveals the irreducible originality of the internal act.

Furthermore, subjectivity is not a mere epiphenomenon but a radical originality. Finally, we can add that positive sciences necessitate the subject.¹⁴¹

Motives

Blondel believes that the interior act itself is

clear, precise, positive and scientific. Consciousness is complex for it takes its nourishment from the immense milieu that it sums up in itself and it sums it up by surpassing it by forming an original synthesis. It accomplishes this synthesis by becoming the act of all its conditions and its subalternate powers. As such the principle of every conscious phenomenon is a dynamism. It is clear here to realize that Blondel has had to look in consciousness for the internal principle, the determining principle of action.¹⁴³

It goes without saying that there is no such thing as empty consciousness. Nothing acts upon us or through us unless it has been organized and integrated in us. Consciousness opens up only because of the "intermediation of the unconscious influence of life".¹⁴⁴ The motive and the desire is the repercussion and synthesis of a multiplicity of activities from within the unconscious life of the subject. The motive is a conclusion of a whole prior system and the "power by which it rises to consciousness is precisely that by which it is also able to act on the unconscious forces from which it emerges".¹⁴⁴

Blondel states that a motive is not a motive without something that moves, that is, a "mobile".¹⁴⁵ But a "mobile" is not a "mobile" without a motive. What this circular presentation means is that, in order to become an efficacious principle of action, diffused energies need to be gathered into a mental synthesis and represented under the form of an end to be realized such that the final cause becomes the moving cause and ideas and signs are the conditions of the disposition they manifest.¹⁴⁶ Once the confused and incoherent impulses of desire have formed into a clear conception of an act they are indebted to the systematic unity of internal representation for giving them a precise goal. When we act without knowing why, the reasons we give ourselves are neither the ones nor the truest ones because there always subsists a vague sense, an ulterior end which surpasses experience. Here Blondel means that the actual motive of our act is never the same as at the origin of the choice that inclined towards it. This is because there is always something unforeseen that carries us off and thrusts us forward.¹⁴⁷ As Blondel says, we live only by hope. We belong ultimately to a world higher than sense phenomena or scientific facts. Instincts work in view of ends foreign to the individual. Action truly hangs from an effective finality, say Blondel.¹⁴⁸ Consciousness results from unconscious acts and series of elementary acts and consciousness constitutes from there a synthesis and thus

prepares or begins a new series of acts whose end it does not foresee and it operates out of heuristic principles. We live by faith but we act in hope.¹⁴⁵ There is something in us that desires more than we can represent. We know more than we can tell.¹⁴⁶ If there is anything to be discovered, it will be revealed only through action. Blondel insists that thought and action are inseparable as well as intention and execution. Action, indeed, carries us beyond explicit thought and representation. Thus to discover the meaning of life and man's destiny, we must, in Blondel's estimate, study action.

Freedom, Determinism, Reflection

If a single motive exists in consciousness, it is not a motive. In this case it would be an animal desire or a compulsive desire or an idée fixe. It would not be an idea. Ideas imply contrast and internal opposition because consciousness is born of discrimination and differentiation. Man's animal automatism is penetrated by the law of simultaneous or alternating contrasts. As such, if every act of consciousness is a synthesis of elementary forces and it is a new principle of force (idea or feeling), it is also true that every consciousness of an act results from a conflict, disturbance, a halt or an inhibition in the mental dynamism. Thus consciousness becomes reflection the moment we are aware of conflicting and contrasting interior states.

As Blondel regards it, reflection is the relation in consciousness of the parts contrasting with one another and with the whole.¹⁵¹ Therefore, as soon as there is internal contraries and a halt of tendencies, consciousness becomes reflection. However it is Reason that contains in it the entire system of rival reasons. Reason contains them all, distinguishes itself from them all and sets them all in balance because it sees that each of them is part of the whole, namely one motive among the others. This is why reflection paralyzes them equally.¹⁵² Reason narrows the breadth of spontaneous life, yet it broadens the power of particular motives since it is capable of making any of them inhibit all the others. Therefore no motive by itself has absolute sovereignty over the others. Viewed from the bottom, determinism seems to be ruled by an immanent necessity while seen from above, the determinism of these forces is never absolute. The victory of any contending force will depend on the decision of Reason.¹⁵³ Reflection therefore derives from spontaneity and emancipates itself from it by explaining it. When reflection appears, every tendency is held in check. Reflection, Blondel says, suspends the immanent activity through a power it borrows or acquires from the antagonistic tendencies and which is higher than each and all.¹⁵⁴

At this point a question is raised. Do reflection and Reason bring about the death of action, that is, inhibit the

dynamism of life from creativity and freedom? Yet that act that proceeds from the inner workings of Reason is said to be free. Blondel explains:

Mise en évidence par le fonctionnement même du déterminisme interne, une puissance nouvelle maintient en suspens tout le mouvement de la spontanéité. Or quel est ce pouvoir de comprendre à la fois un système d'idées complémentaires et d'en paralyser l'influence immédiate pour y réfléchir et en délibérer? C'est ce qu'on nomme communément la raison; et l'acte qui procédera de ce travail intérieur, c'est celui qu'on appelle d'ordinaire sans distinguer assez ce qui mérite de l'être, l'acte humain, l'acte raisonnable, l'acte volontaire, l'acte libre, l'acte ou l'action tout court.¹⁵⁵

Our awareness of determinism entails a complementary notion of freedom. To know what freedom is, one must have had a conscious experience of the primitive automatism of interior energies. Blondel states that consciousness of contrasting motives does not occur without the thought of what is inaccessible to relation and to limitation, without the known and possessed presence of an absolute.¹⁵⁶ In short, consciousness of these contrasts cannot occur without the regulative idea of the infinite.¹⁵⁷ What this means is that Reason is transcendental and is incommensurable with regards to its subaltern powers and to be incommensurable is to the infinite. As such there is "no effective synthesis, no internal act or state of consciousness... that is not transcendent regarding its conditions and where the infinite is not present".¹⁵⁸ Reflection is a force of forces "for thought is a form of action which it makes into a free will".¹⁵⁹ Therefore the decisive reason for an act "resides

in this power which none of the particular determinations could exhaust".¹⁰⁰ As such, conscious action finds its explanation and reason in "a principle irreducible to the facts of consciousness and to sensible phenomena"¹⁰¹. Certainly it can be conscious of its own initiative by attributing the character of infinitude and transcendence to itself. All the power of efficient causes is at the service of final causes. This results in a sense of free will. Therefore to be a subject is to be a self-determining agent, and it is in this sense that the subject is infinite.

In the voluntary act a subject is conscious of being free and senses that he controls both the act and the goal of the act. To act in view of an end, therefore, one participates in a power which cannot be measured in terms of antecedent determinisms. Yet Reason would not be in us without the dynamism of unconscious and spontaneous life. According to Blondel, the organic process would not develop without the existence of a directive idea since it is under the hidden influence of finality that motives and states of consciousness brought forth reflection and with it, the consciousness of a free power.¹⁰² Therefore, "reflection and freedom would be impossible in one who, instead of acting was acted upon".¹⁰³ Once the energy of efficient causality shifts into the language of finality, the antecedent determinism becomes the means of the agent. Therefore a new power is revealed. Blondel puts the matter

this way:

L'acte volontaire va donc de l'infini à l'infini, parce, que l'infini y est cause efficiente et cause finale. La liberté, loin d'exclure le déterminisme, en sort et en use; le déterminisme, loin d'exclure la liberté, la prépare et la produit. Peu importe l'ordre chronologique: le temps n'est qu'une façon de représenter l'unité subjective de l'action dans la multiplicité des phénomènes, n'est que la projection objective et pour ainsi dire le projet de la finalité transcendente dont s'inspire la raison.¹⁴⁴

Reflection, as it scans the series of efficient causes and final causes in all directions and seeing when the act comes, then proceeds into nature to take up the thread of causes that leads to a goal. The voluntary determination of the act is added to the determination of brute force, animal instinct or mental spontaneity. In order to act, says Blondel, we need to participate in an infinite power and to be conscious of acting we need to have the idea of this infinite power.¹⁴⁵ But the synthesis of power and the idea of the infinite is to be found in the reasonable act. This synthesis is what Blondel calls freedom.¹⁴⁶ As Somerville comments,

The reasonable act simultaneously involves consciousness, the awareness of the antecedent determinism, reflection and inhibition, efficient and final causes, and the regulative ideas of freedom, power and the infinite.¹⁴⁷

Freedom is the scandal of science says Blondel, yet the movement of science rests on a profound will.¹⁴⁸ Two things, however, can be said at this point. First, that determinism has necessarily led to the awareness of freedom. Secondly, freedom, being aware of itself, ratifies all that goes prior. Blondel; therefore, is of the belief that if

determinism seems to contradict freedom it is because people have placed an ontological value to it. For Blondel action has its own vital sap - it is always a beyond.¹⁷¹ Once a person acts he is not preoccupied with the efficient causes of his decisions because in Blondel's words, he has superseded the entire "mechanism of unconscious life".¹⁷² We can say that the person dominates the deterministic elements that comes prior because he is preoccupied with what he is intending. Blondel maintains that "true knowledge is that reflexion which turns the interior look forward toward the ends that solicit the will".¹⁷³ That is enough reason to guide his will. Certainly one looks behind to know better where he is going but the final cause is always more than efficient cause. The reason for action, therefore, is found in an end that transcends nature or science. Finality is always more than the determinism because it is a living synthesis.¹⁷⁴

Once we have awakened to the sense for freedom by reflection, we cannot help but use it. Free will rises necessarily. Free will ratifies all the consequences of its new necessity which reveals the will to itself. Blondel maintains that if this determinism or "determined power" is defined only in that it wills rather than by what it wills, then this concatenation entails a scientific determination.¹⁷⁵ What this reveals is that there "is a necessary logic of freedom".¹⁷⁶ Thus we can better

understand the nature of freedom as it is revealed in the logic of events that follow from the exercise of freedom. From a posteriori knowledge we can spell out the deeper a priori intention of a primordial will.¹⁷⁵ Blondel intimates that what seems to be a heteronomous order of necessities and obligations which stand over and above the will really corresponds to the will's most intimate desire.¹⁷⁶

The question is raised at this point concerning the fact that if freedom was necessarily generated out of prior determinations and that it has necessary consequences, is not freedom another name for determinism? After all, is freedom not subordinated to an idea or vision that is clear and precise? Is freedom a canonization of arbitrariness and indeterminacy? To answer these concerns Blondel explores the shift from autonomy to heteronomy, that is, with the form of freedom to its exercise under law. This is because intention becomes sincere and complete when it passes into action. What Blondel wishes to show is how action, while remaining free, is subject to the laws of moral necessity. In this way Blondel wants to "do away with the chimerical conception of a freedom of indifference, the contrary illusion of a determinism of the good and the error of moral formalism".¹⁷⁷ Blondel points out that while we are conscious of an inner power that gives us our decisions, this very power is not defined and seems to be a blind and

arbitrary force, in fact, as he calls it, an "unreason" (deraisson).¹⁷⁸ How can free will become the true reason for the final solution by choosing one of the choices to which it wills? The answer that Blondel suggests is that, while necessarily immanent at first, freedom "confers upon the object of its preferences a character of transcendence", and submitting to a heteronomy in order to maintain its own sovereignty, it brings to the service of one chosen tendency, the very forces of the rival tendencies.¹⁷⁹ It uses the power it would have once used in order not to do. This is how it proposes a reason as an end in itself. Thus subjective freedom absolutizes the relative. Whenever the will acts freely, it always sets before it, a reason for its choice, otherwise the act would be blind. But Blondel emphasizes, freedom is the reason. While any other subordinate motive can be sufficient reason, it is only when the motive of freedom is compounded by another incentive that one has a true sufficient reason.¹⁸⁰ To quote Blondel, "free freedom ... is the one that wills to will, the one which, first suppressing the natural efficacy of the spontaneous tendencies, consents to undergo the attraction of one of them only to the extent that it places in it the reason for its resolution".¹⁸¹ What this means is that freedom becomes both the power and the motive for that choice. We act, not because we are free, but because we wish to develop our freedom with regards to specific goals, thus

showing that freedom is not indifferent or irrational and blind but a conscious and rational operation, a rational choice. Freedom discriminates between motives but does not yield to any unless it is compounded with a motive of freedom.¹⁶² The problem arises when we propose freedom as our end rather than an actual subjective possession. What happens is that we feel a disproportion between the willing will (what proceeds from the will) and the willed will (what becomes the object of the will).¹⁶³ When it becomes a goal for itself, freedom appears empty and inert. The willed will is not adequate to the will itself. What we will cannot be willed at once. There occurs an inevitable partiality of the will in action. Thus the reason for the act is never total. Duty will always appear as a risk. When freedom is proposed as an end, it appears as a pure idea, a subjective nothing. Somerville offers this comment:

... when freedom becomes an objective end, it is seen that it contains the generic outline of something that ought to be. There is nothing automatic about our realization of our objective freedom: we must will it. But the moment we try to will it effectively it imposes on us many sacrifices and calls for an immense effort. This is the first hint of the emergence of the notion of duty or obligation which entails the need to subject the will to a moral heteronomy beyond the realm of the will's subjective autonomy.¹⁶⁴

Since we cannot realize every motive within us a choice has to be made which involves a sacrifice of all that was not chosen. But by what criterion will we make that choice? By what norm will we choose? Another question can be raised which pinpoints the issue more clearly. How does the

will want its own autonomy to be subject to an heteronomous moral rule? Blondel reminds us that the freedom within us is only "a means for attaining the fulness of whatever we will"¹⁰. Since we are not what we will, we are dependent with regards to our true end which means that "what we really will is, not what is already realized in us but what surpasses us and commands us".¹¹ Therefore we will what we are: in fact, "there is always a heteronomy that imposes itself on consciousness".¹² What we need to look at is the relation between subjective autonomy and objective heteronomy of duty and obligation.

Autonomy and Heteronomy

Blondel maintains that to propose freedom as our end, as moral formalism does, is not simply to stop at the autonomy of willing. This, of course, entails a misunderstanding of our first duty and in it, all other duties. It entails, by pretending to preserve the purity and integrity of freedom, the keeping of a dead image. Blondel states that our first duty is to acknowledge duty and this consists of recognizing the fact that it imposes on interior freedom not just submission but sacrifice, not a respect and trust for the law, but, most important, a positive act which sooner or later surpasses a "purely formal conformity of the intention with duty"¹³. We do not know what duty requires of us or what the contents of the obligation are or would be

but what our most sincere will looks for is a law that requires more of it than it has achieved. The moral law requires more of freedom than this freedom is yet. By taking itself as the ulterior goal, freedom stops appearing autonomous; it is autonomous. There is more to conquer, that is, that which lies outside the subject. Now, if the subject is to be true and sincere, he must submit action to the demands of a moral heteronomy. Thus reflection and resolution confers a new character, a new reality, a synthesis of the voluntary and the willed. It becomes the transcendent end of our freedom. That very freedom cannot look at itself from the beginning as an absolute because the subject now sees himself as an "imperfect becoming". Moral law is not simply and only an "ought to be" (devoir etre) which could not be; it is already because it is "to be" (doit etre). Therefore "heteronomy is not contrary to the profound wish of freedom; it only consecrates it and responds to it".

In action, we cannot pinpoint at any junction the continuous movement that carries us along through the senses, through science and through consciousness. At each junction, each level, we realize that we have to go further than we had foreseen. This is because at each level there is a new synthesis, a new starting point. There is never an end to "becoming". Freedom, therefore, becomes for itself a transcendental end but it pretends to find satisfaction in

its power, hence, says (Blondel), "moral heteronomy is the necessary complement of the autonomy of the will".¹⁵² What is important is not to will what we are, but rather, to be what we will because we are separated from ourselves. Somerville says that "Law is not contrary to the deeper desire of the will, but something written in its very constitution".¹⁵³ For Blondel, the moral law is indispensable to freedom. To emancipate ourselves from duty (under the pretence that it is obscure, painful etc...) is to be inconsequent with science and with consciousness.¹⁵⁴ It moral obligation, indeed, appears to us with an imperative character, it still has necessary repercussions of its own in our life. Heteronomy, whether we like it or not, is imposed on consciousness. The sense of obligation confers, to be sure, a moral aspect. But Blondel is quick to assert that as much as the presence of duty is a principle of internal antagonism, it is; nonetheless, a principle of strength and even still, a point of departure for a new dynamism. As soon as this consciousness of obligation has arisen, what results from the will is an immense connection of necessary consequences.

It is important here for Blondel that no matter what the formula or falsification of morality may be, the issue is to determine the element common to every use of freedom and grab hold of what residue remains necessary and inevitable. This is because in whatever we will freely there is always a

latent determinism. This necessity reveals to the will the series of means it imposes on itself. This necessity also discloses to the person what he cannot avoid. It will bring to light what is implicit in the will and only when intentions become embodied do we see ourselves as we are. Hence, it is outside ourselves that we seek the perfection of the interior life. The will seeks from the outside: it commits itself to the determinism of outside powers. Truly the act is the sign of sincere convictions. It is action itself, as Blondel argues, that is the integrating aspect of the intention. Execution, beyond the intention is an original power.¹²³

While consciousness of freedom arose from acting, it is also necessary to act in order to develop our freedom and to know it better. But this freedom will not preserve and complete itself unless it objectifies itself. It is illusory, maintains Blondel, to imagine that we can determine duty by the operation of deductive reasoning.¹²⁴ This is not the way we bring content to the formal law. It is necessary to act and this is because moral intention becomes embodied into ourselves through action. Through action it unfolds and comes back to consciousness more clearly. Again, what is necessary in the obligation to act corresponds to the sincerity of the primitive willing.¹²⁵ Where we wish to arrive at is precisely that point where what we will proceeds spontaneously from ourselves and at that point where there is

an agreement between the elan and the result of our effort. Yet there is a large gap between what we are to what we will to be. But what keeps us from closing the gap? Blondel answers that it is the presence of hostile desires, interior divisions, internal war, of tendencies and automatism.

It is clear that we cannot isolate freedom or obligation from their antecedents. It is necessary to arrive at a new synthesis. Action precedes and follows moral freedom. Free will becomes and it makes itself. Action is nourished on unconscious forces, spontaneous sentiments and reflected desires. Furthermore, action is concrete, a living seed, an evolutionary power which enjoys a natural growth. Blondel says that through action we restore to the universe what we borrowed from it. We do moralize our animal nature by embodying the operative virtue of duty and we learn, in action, what we have to do. Thus moral obligations take shape in the deployment of life. Action orients our life. Through the immense expansion within the organic, intellectual and moral world, the same will is always in search of itself.

Duty is not to be superimposed upon freedom from the outside. The question is that of finding or discovering duty in freedom and finding in what is not yet, the secret desire of what is already. Therefore, "actual autonomy would in truth be heteronomy". In the same manner that the antecedent determinism was indispensable for the

manifestation of free will, the consequent determinism is an integrating condition of freedom. Therefore, in conceiving the moral law and in requiring it, there lies the necessity of producing and practicing it in action so that we may know it and determine it. This twofold aspect, according to Blondel, constitutes a single truth.²⁰⁴ In truth, action always envelops, integratively all the series of its scientific conditions and moral relations.

CHAPTER IV

GROUNDING OF ETHICS

Foundations

Dynamics of the Will

Blondel defines action as "the intention living in the organism and fashioning the obscure energies from which it had emerged".¹ Therefore, in order for it to develop, freedom had to unfold and in this way make spontaneous life produce motives and goals that are to conform to a more profound aspiration. This movement from spontaneity to determinism to spontaneity and so forth occurs in science, consciousness and in the moral life. Thus we can say that voluntary action unfolds itself and it is for this reason that Blondel undertakes to study the very phenomena of voluntary action.² It is important to keep in mind that there is a disproportion between what we are and what we will to be. This means that there is "something" to be conquered. Therefore Blondel's phenomenology of action is an attempt to study the self, not as it is concentrated in interior analysis, but as action constitutes it.³ What this entails, is a looking at "the chain of determinism consecutive to the willed actions" and to study its necessary unfolding.⁴ We

notice that there is a gap between two determinisms, the antecedent and the consequent determinisms. What occurs in the gaps are freedom and reflection. The gaps are filled out but only at the price of opening further gaps in the unfolding of voluntary action. Therefore intention passes from the interior organism and branches out into the social sphere and from there into the sphere of family life, political life and the life of humanity as a whole."

Blondel, as we see, understands the unfolding of the will as a continuous ascent or expansion by means of syntheses. As such, voluntary action is an emergent unfolding of a hierarchy that is forever open-ended. In this way unconscious/determinism is not only behind the voluntary intention but it lies also "ahead", in the form of objects, goals and duties. Spontaneity arises from deterministic factors but once there exists final causes, spontaneity fades away into another antecedent cause. We will ourselves out of and away from what determines a priori and we will ourselves towards what determines us a postérieur. To put the matter in another way, the organism wills itself away from the determinisms of biological necessities in order to will itself into a psychological sphere of action. The subject then wills himself out of the sphere of psychological necessities and wills himself into the sphere of social action. From the determinisms of social action, the will aspires into the further determinisms of family life only to

further will itself into the political and then the sphere of humanity.

The shifts in willing from one sphere to another - entails freedom and power. But in order to will further out to turn ends into further means freedom and power have to be relinquished. What has to be overcome are resistances, obstacles and other inhibitory powers. Such problematics become self-integrated which allows further developments to take place. Therefore every new point of arrival is another new point of departure. Yet there remains a price. Blondel states.

Il y a en nous une inconstance de volonté, une pluralité de desirs qui font de tout acte un déchirement intérieur: antagonisme secret qui est le principe des luttes de la vie pratique et qui fait souvent avorter nos plus fermes décisions. Car vouloir et faire sont deux. Si c'est beaucoup pour nous de connaître ce que nous voulons vraiment, nosse; si c'est bien plus encore de vouloir ce vouloir même, velle; c'est infiniment davantage de l'exécuter, perficere. Il y avait déjà entre la conception et la détermination un intervalle; il y a entre la décision et l'exécution un abîme à franchir.

Therefore, by examining the effort necessary to implement the execution of every act Blondel points out the presence of forces hostile to every action initiated by the will. But these multiple forces reveal, below the level of reflection a subjective life insofar as they express themselves through tendencies towards "glimpsed ends". What is important is the fact that the resistance of the body (which seems to have a will of its own) is not the enemy of freedom. In fact, it is the source of vitality which serves the will.

Once the threshold of consciousness is crossed, the subject enters the sphere of explicit finality whereby the "ends" as mental syntheses, have a life of their own.

irreducible to the sum of antecedent efficient causes.¹⁰

This ideal that enters into consciousness becomes a new point of departure. Thus the effects of the order of finality accompany consciousness. Once the will decides to act, it carries with it all the elementary forces that determined it. But this is only one stage between intention and execution.

Only in the execution do resistances appear and this makes it possible for the will to be aware of the "will" of the body.

Hence consciousness appears once we experience conflict. The conscious will becomes alienated and separated from the "will" of the body. The Cartesian problem, of course,

entailed a view of this separation, seeing the body as separate and exterior. For Blondel the role of the body

reveals quite clearly the disproportion between two wills, between what we implicitly desire and explicitly realize.¹¹

Once we overcome organic resistance the will begins to penetrate the organism and dominate it. This is made possible by the fact that the body-image is a vital principle of mediation. As such, the body-image is a subjective consciousness of the organism. It is an instrument that makes possible the expansion of the will. The body-image, as representation, enables the self to be immanent to its members. Blondel notes that suffering or spiritual anguish is

the result of our conscious awareness of the disproportion between what is desired and what is achieved.¹² It is this disproportion that distinguishes man from the animals. In the animal "world", there seems to be no distinction between "work" and "play". Blondel's insightful observation suggests that only man does violence to his nature and "kills" himself with work. Leisure is the sport of the gods, man must toil, physically and mentally. This, according to Blondel, reflects a "moral dislocation".¹³ Pain is a result of the division within man. It is by immersing ourselves into something that we love or by losing ourselves in objects that we erase the experience of pain. For Blondel this is the result of the warfare between the exigencies of life and the spontaneous interests of the spirit.¹⁴ Blondel calls labor a "passion, in action, a suffering, an intimate contradiction".¹⁵ In addition, "conscious suffering supposes the presence in us of unconscious energies that do not rally forthwith to the will".¹⁶ The result is that the will does not reach all the forces it would like to have serve its ends. It arouses powers that even supplant it and we end up acting "willing against our will".¹⁷ And, in addition, Blondel states that what is morally tragic is that "once we have done what we did not will through the pull of a passionate movement, since it is what we might have willed, the act we once thought unreasonable seems to contain all of a sudden an unforeseen reason, a reason, it is felt, when it had received a part

of its triumphant force a reason capable of rallying to it the consent of the weakening will".¹⁴

The subaltern powers can supplant and mimic reason in a way that powers below the level of reflection substitute themselves for reason and the will. This action which comes out of us, against our willing, this very unreasonable action which we use to give ourselves a new reason is what Blondel calls passion.¹⁵ Blondel points out that those under the domination of passion, achieve this counterfeiting of the voluntary act by a coalition of the powers which the will has declared war against. The object of their passion, says Blondel, is their all, where they act in view of the whole. Everything is nothing! The passionate one feels absolute, independent, self-sufficient and infinite. Such a person, points out Blondel; is isolated on unknown heights, standing above the human crowd and despising it and "he has no affection, not duty, no honor, no strength, no life except the one thing loved, but he thinks he has all that to the highest degree".¹⁶ In addition, "he would wound, despoil, annihilate his idol in order to have to heal, enrich it, create it....He becomes cruel in order to manifest his omnipotence and his omnigoodness".¹⁷ Blondel goes on to say that the animal has no passion, while what is animal in man lays claim to everything that reason and will require, namely, infinite satisfaction.¹⁸ Human sensuality is insatiable and also unreasonable because it is shot through

with a force alien to and higher than the senses. Furthermore this reason (immanent to passion) acquires such ascendancy that it can take over from reasonable reason (la raison raisonnable).²³ It confiscates its infinite aspirations. As such, willed action under the dominance of passion is complete only if it has captured freedom; dragging it along as prisoner, as accomplice, as instigator. There, as Blondel says, we are forced to admit that we do not do all that we have willed and we do not will all that we do voluntarily.

The consequences of action can be summarized by saying, with Blondel, that "we almost never do all that we will; we often do what we do not will; we end up willing what we did not will."²⁴ Because action arises contrary to our willing, at first, without our awareness and finally consenting, unconsciously, we end up willing what we did not will. Truly, in consciousness, in decision, in execution we are easily outwitted. Yet, we must not forget that in executing the action we did not will, there are still consequences that arise. No willing act or unwilling willing is insignificant. Therefore, at this point, with Blondel we may conclude that it is through action that we recognize the division at the heart of our moral being.²⁵

Mediation of Action

What does action accomplish? Blondel stipulates that it unites the divergent forces into a unified flow,

constituting an organic synthesis by serving as mediator between all the forms of physical and spiritual activity.²⁶ Unity exists in our complex organism only through cohesion constituted by co-operation. As such, action "is the cement with which we are fashioned", that is, we subsists only to the extent that we act.²⁷ The fiat of the will puts an end to hesitations of thought and gives unity, solidity and precision to multiple representations. In short, action generates organized life and in action the unity of the synthesis marks true individuality. Action also envelops and sweeps opposed tendencies and makes of these tendencies a single unit body. Blondel states that,

Tandis que dans la conscience il y a irradiation, en plusieurs sens et en plusieurs couches, d'images, de désirs et de mouvements ébauchés, c'est une action qui, concentrant parfois violemment ces énergies diffuses les subordonne toutes à un système unique et obtient la convergence des pensées par le concours des opérations organiques, drainant de la sorte toute activité disponible pour ne former du corps et de l'esprit qu'un même tout expressif.²⁸

Action unites the organism and raises it from the level of deterministic mechanism to that of reason and freedom.

Action, via the progress of the initial will in the organism "participates in the integrity and the vigor of the higher intention" or, again, "it is through action that the soul gets a body and the body gets a soul".²⁹ Action is its substantial bond.³⁰ What Blondel is getting at is that in us, "transcendence implies immanence".³¹

Blondel maintains that when willed operation comes to

completion there is synergy and concurrence; action is a living synthesis. Intention, in order for it to remain sincere, throws itself into execution which in itself requires effort. A necessity arises, however, and that is the fact that action can only be produced by arousing opposition and overcoming the antagonistic system. Action shifts us from the drowsy, unconscious type of bodily mechanisms into an activity of higher awareness where novelty, creativity and spontaneity, characterized as freedom, takes place only to become a higher form of deterministic mechanism. But action is the means for expansion and enrichment and provides, amidst the indifference and disarray of interior states, a solid centre, in short, it forms a personality.²²

In acting, we end up willing what we could not have willed at first. By willing we undergo the full range of the influence of our inclinations and habits. It is interesting to note that Blondel says that we do not will to will because we could easily say that will will to will, and it would go on ad infinitum.-- It is true and clear that action puts the organism into motion. All the subaltern motives and habits shift their allegiance from the body to the spirit. In this way, we can agree with Blondel, that willed action is the "principle of ... voluntary and free action".²⁴ Action, therefore, "co-ordinates and disciplines all our energies, rallies the contrary tendencies into a composite force, and orients toward the willed end everything in us that can be"

converted to it: it makes even what is opposed to the declared will pass into the act".³³ Elsewhere Blondel states,

La pratique réussit, sans cesse et sans pretention, a ce prodige ou échouent les spéculations abstraites: elle unit, dans une synthèse nouvelles les tendances opposées qui, victorieuses et vaincues, sont, toutes représentées réformées, transformées dans l'acte accompli, parce qu'il y a solidarité inévitable, solidarité conforme au vœu de la volonté, entre des parties qui ne pourraient être indépendantes qu'en un chimérique état d'indifférence complète ou d'absolu repos.³⁴

Through action the unity of vital mechanisms is kept up and tightened and antagonistic tendencies melt into an agreement. Therefore human individuality is a "synthesis at once organic and psychological" and this results from synergy.³⁵ Every act is an invisible unity wherein human initiative-meets with the phenomena of the universe. The will embodies itself. Freedom which at first had been an exemption from antecedent necessity, becomes the master of itself - a more "free freedom".³⁶ Therefore it is important to realize that the "substance of man is action" - he is what he does.³⁷ As such, the fullness of our original will accounts for an insatiable exigency. It thrusts us onwards.

Just as formal freedom had saved its autonomy by imposing on itself the heteronomy of obligation, in the same manner, a person is constituted by assigning to itself an impersonal end. It is true, man is insufficient. He acts towards others, with others, for others. He has to act beyond himself in order to complete himself. Actions extend

infinitely because our existences are so tied together. We cannot be sufficient unto ourselves and we cannot remain alone.⁴⁰ Therefore the will always extends itself exteriorily. As Blondel puts the matter,

L'égoïsme nous aveugle: c'est en sortant de la vie individuelle, en nous attachant ailleurs qu'en nous, que nous nous posséderons le mieux. L'enfant ne vit encore que pour soi; et c'est pour cela qu'il n'est pas en soi. Nul souci des autres, de leurs jugements ou de leurs plaisirs. La ~~fa~~ison apparaît en lui, il devient une personne du jour où il sait prêter, contre lui-même, un moi aux étrangers; du jour où il participe, fut-ce à ses dépens, à la personne d'autrui, et où il fait un effort sur soi pour n'être pas naïvement le centre de tout. Il y a, en effet, une place centrale à prendre en nous: elle ne peut nous appartenir; à qui le donnerons-nous? L'illusion de l'égoïsme c'est d'y prétendre.⁴¹

The will therefore triumphs by tending towards impersonal ends and unconscious ends. In order to act, we must "alienate ourselves to others, hand ourselves over to forces we shall no longer dominate".⁴² Therefore, ironically, no sooner do we rise to reflection and freedom that we find ourselves again trapped in a mechanism that denies our autonomy and individuality.⁴³ As the organism asserted itself out of the mechanism of baby-hood into a spontaneous and free intentionality, now has to relinquish its acquired autonomy and give itself over to the "other". But it is important to note that for Blondel this movement occurs endlessly, such that means become ends and these ends, in turn, become further means and this dialectic of means and ends continues on infinitely because the willed will never commensurates with the willing will. The explicit will never reaches far

enough. Its reach stretches only as far as the finite. The implicit will stretches towards the infinite, beyond, and always beyond the reach of the explicit will.⁴⁴ But why does the will not stop willing? Because there is "something". Action demands, requires and intends us to keep that will willing. Action gives a unity and a foundation to that dynamism of willing which in itself is torn asunder because there is an endless disproportion between the infinite willing and the finite willing. The ethical moment, in my mind, occurs when reflection recovers the primary source of all existence thus unifying the dualistic will. But the possibility of that moment can only occur when the entire deployment of willing has been represented in the signs. Therefore we need to follow with Blondel to the very end of willing, that continuous thrust of a will forever trying to capture itself, that very irreducible "something" without which willing would not be possible. Ethics is the reflective recovery of that primordial and irreducible source of all our being and it is my contention that Blondel provides the elements and the foundations of such an ethic.

Dynamics of Action and Intersubjectivity

Signs

Blondel's phenomenological analysis does not confine itself only to the individual. Because action also enters the social realm, it is also necessary to explore its operation

beyond the organism. It is important to remind ourselves that there is no efficient cause that does not ultimately aim at a final goal. This is an admission of insufficiency and a request for help. The individual, as mentioned before, is not sufficient unto himself. He needs to expand and deploy his will beyond himself. According, then, to Blondel, the initiative of forces exterior to individuality are immanent to the first desire.⁴³ Individual life is an inevitable expansion - an "exergy", as Blondel calls it.⁴⁴ There is a "current of power" that enters into us but before it comes out again, it becomes, within, organized and modified. This new organization, this synthesis constitutes the fact of every action. Every act that comes out of the human organism is "an organism of signs and a symbol expressive of subjective life".⁴⁵ Action has its own expression, "its own trace or physiognomy".⁴⁶ These conscious signs express only a part of the reflected activity. In addition to this, it forms only part of the total and spontaneous sign. Produced within the individual a sign is a synthesis of images, internal states, movements and so forth. The total system expresses itself in its very totality. As such, the sign is a natural consequence of the operation interior to the agent. Hence, Blondel is able to state that "it is the inspiration and the role and the goal of the signs ... that make of the individual a center of radiation".⁴⁷ Everything hangs together in the deployment of our acts. Blondel believes that

the method lies in deciphering the deep aspiration that the institutions of signs, language and symbols correspond to. Furthermore, we have to decipher on what hidden wish it is grounded.³⁰ How does man insert himself into the world of phenomena? How does his mediating action operate? Simply put, what is the real and deep reason for the entire unfolding in the world? These questions lead Blondel to examine the nature of the sign inherent in every operation of man. Nothing, says Blondel, in the expansion of the will is superfluous. Nothing in the expansion of the will stands outside the series of the means that direct the will to its ends.

Blondel maintains that to consider only the "material" of the sign would be a falling back into the study of the phenomena which the positive sciences submit to their laws and mechanical determinisms.³¹ How is it that action is the expressive value of phenomena and that action is the subjective meaning of phenomena? Blondel answers by stating that in our production there subsists an image ("like a soul of intimate life") and to produce is to beget an animated being; it is to detach from the self a "new creature that continues to grow as a separate organism".³² Man's first work is to fashion for himself his own matter and through this he produces an immediate trace which organizes outside the confines of the individual an image, or, better still, an expression of the act. This expression is the stamp of the whole agent, his personal signature (sign-nature). The sign

reveals what is unique. This singular and concrete aspect is what is ignored by the positive sciences but it is rightly the object of the science of action.

What constitutes the originality of each act? Blondel answers that "it is the unity of the intelligible relations that form the synthesis or the very organism of the sign" and in that sign there exists "a commerce between the agent and something other than the agent, a new synthesis of the individual life and the milieu in which it unfolds".⁵³

Every sign, therefore, is a work, not merely the internal operation, nor some phenomenon, nor a fact which could be handed over to the positive sciences. A sign, in Blondel's view, is a secondary subject; it is "an intention embodied and vivified".⁵⁴ Blondel says the sign "marks an effective progress of the will; it responds to a real need; it is in conformity with the primitive intention and useful to it, by orienting it toward its completion".⁵⁵ There Blondel sees a relation between the natural expression of the act and the intentional end it proposes for itself. Blondel writes:

L'expression immédiate de la vie intérieure est la matière et comme la substance sensible des désirs et des états invisibles qui, recueillis par la réflexion, nous amèneront à poursuivre des fins distinctes et à produire des oeuvres particulières. Cette expansion nécessaire a donc un sens; et ce sens, c'est dans le dessein de la volonté en quête de son accroissement qu'il se trouve: rien donc qui ne rentre dans le plan volontaire de notre vie, rien qui n'y serve, pas même la manifestation spontanée de nos opérations intimes et l'unité expressive de l'acte.

Du moment en effet où l'opération voulue et inaugurée marque son empreinte dans le déterminisme des faits, du moment où elle tend à déterminer selon son orientation

propre le système total, la volonté dévoile peu à peu sa puissance et son ambition. Elle commence à pénétrer le monde de ses intentions comme elle en avait déjà pénétré l'organisme. Elle aspire à devenir comme l'âme de tout ce qui l'environne et la sert. Elle prétend gagner l'univers et le dominer en l'absorbant.⁵⁶

Therefore the sign that expresses the motor operation on the outside is an invasion and an absorption of the universe by the will. In the same way that willing, by spreading itself in the organism was an attempt to complete itself, now by penetrating into the external world and pouring itself out into the sign "spends itself ... as if in the end the entire universe were to become immanent to it".⁵⁷

Blondel maintains that through science the world of phenomena is penetrated by the spirit where everything is communicated, circulated and exchanged. What Blondel means is that the forces of nature have become an organ of the will. But the primitive sign of the inner operation projects our spontaneous aim before us. Therefore, it makes of it a partial object for reflection. Thus in the execution the willed end has a deterministic character. At the origin of reflection and free decision, it was the disproportion between the conditions and exigencies of the willing and the willed activity that gave rise to the notion of finality. Here it is no longer a question of the idea of the end but it is the end itself that the operating will continues to pursue. The sign points to a tendency of willing toward an ulterior goal. This explains why action "seems to be in a perpetual becoming".⁵⁸

The consequences know no limits; the end is merely another means for further ends. If the individual exteriorizes himself it is because there is an insufficiency in him. He seeks completion. He seeks the equation of the will-willing and the will-willed. He lacks an equilibrium in the individual life between "what it is and what we will".

Just as we found powers favorable or rebellious to our interior operation there also subsists in the exterior world forces that are alien or hostile to our aims. But these forces can be converted to the initiative of the will. Therefore, to will, to act, to operate, to produce and so on, we are drawn in conformity with the profound aspiration of our primitive willing. The sign, Blondel suggests, is the germ of an immense growth. This primary sign of life becomes the principle of the signs, natural or willed.

The double movement "centripetal and centrifugal" is contained in one and the same desire of conquest. Efficient cause and final cause, through alternative progress, are the mobile forms of one and the same tendency of the will toward a new extension of its empire. For the sign to be efficacious it needs to be received and given back. Again, action, necessarily expresses itself through a sign and takes place in the total determinism.

There is no act that does not require some collaboration from outside the individual. Therefore in order to act one must accomodate oneself to one's milieu - as such, the sign is fashioned in part by the body it expresses itself in, and the letter of the symbol is active on the very spirit that inspires and animates it.⁴² From this Blondel concludes that "our action ... is never only our action".⁴³ Action must not simply go out of the individual circle but through coaction it must arouse powers alien to ourselves.⁴⁴ How does "allergy" (another's action) enter into the movement of our will? We may say that the unfolding of the will depends as much as on the object it intends as it does on the subject from which it intends. But the moment that an object serves as a goal we expect something more than we bring to it. Therefore, as Blondel points out, the final cause is in part its efficient cause.⁴⁵ Not only does it provide an end, it also furnishes the accompaniment of the action that leads to it and that calls to it. What is important to understand is that the end as final cause occurs on the "reciprocal condition" that it will be an efficient cause for which we shall be the final cause.⁴⁶ Blondel believes that the true goal of the egotist, from this perspective, is not really the object that he wants to conquer but rather himself. He is his own goal. Otherwise,

Nous n'aspirons à ce que nous n'avons pas, que si quelque chose doit produire avec nous ou pour nous une sythèse nouvelle dans laquelle la fin apparemment convoitée n'entre plus que comme un élément et un

moyen.⁶⁷

One's actions have too be transformed and this transformation has been willed unforeseenably and out of proportion with one's plans. Action, to be sure, is an extension of willing outside ourselves. It goes out but only to bring into itself and assimilate and integrate that wherein it appears to alienate itself. We cannot but draw on forces alien to ours. This, Blondel says, is the coalition required for the production of the least sign of our activity.⁶⁸

Blondel modifies the ancient peripatetic definition by saying that an act is more than the passage from a potency to completion under the dominion of a potency already in act. For Blondel, an act is the "synthesis ... and progress of two concurring potencies under the mediation and through the exchange of a efficient cause and a final cause".⁶⁹ Each of the two causes serves as a relative and provisional end for the other. Each has to furnish the other as well as receive from the other. The result will appear as the product of the determinism or the efficiency of the other. Hence, the will finds its completion in the world. Paradoxically, it is only a means in what it is already. It is the true final-cause, in what it wills to be.⁷⁰ Between these two terms there is an intermediary, namely, the "alien cooperation", "allergy", which at first seems to be an end but is really only a means.⁷¹ Therefore, what our personal action requires and

needs in order to perfect our "expansive synergy" (synergie expansive) is the action of something else, something "other".⁷² But, it must be said, that the insufficiency of our allies betray our projects as much as hostilities that are conjured up. Hence, sometimes we get more, sometimes we get less, but never exactly what we willed. What we hoped for, behind the apparent end of the desire, was hidden an infinitely vaster wish.⁷³

What has been emphasized is the fact that our subjective life calls on subjects alien to that, subjective life in order to gain something that was unobtainable without the help of the "other". Therefore it can be said that the essence of coaction is a will that proposes for itself a community of action and effect. It is, therefore, with reason, that Blondel says we dominate phenomena only by using phenomena or signs to lead us back to what determines and produces them. Therefore, we too serve as signs in order to stimulate the forces they proceed from. The efficacy of the act, then, rests on a concurrence of spontaneities.⁷⁴

Just as in the individual life the concurrence of subaltern energies works in us under the mediation of the intention, so too, outside of ourselves the will's role is to orient the external powers by assimilating and integrating them in the act. Again, we draw our own act from a power that surpasses it.⁷⁵

We obtain our action from a force beyond this

determinism and behind the phenomena produced. Therefore, in order to act efficaciously we need to discover and convert to our ends what in the perceived phenomena is their internal subjectivity. From this Blondel concludes that external subjectivity becomes scientific truth. Willing serves the intention by assimilating to the will other energies and add to the individual life something of the universal life. Action, therefore, transforms itself. Between the agent and his cooperators there is established a relation, such that the efficacious cause finds in the other the final cause. Therefore we can say that what is given serves as a guide to the giver.

To summarize, we can say that the individual action imposes itself on the outside through signs. The sign, which harbours a tendency toward a willed end, constitutes itself and works out its effect only if it interests something alien to individual life. Coaction is possible only through a correspondence of the milieu wherein it unfolds. Thus there is a double movement in all exterior operations. First, the expressive sign which imposes itself on the surrounding determinism and secondly, through this sign, the reaction is solicited, demanded and obtained. Hence, the phenomenon of action supposes the convergence of two series of phenomena, the one from the agent and the other provoked from elsewhere. The exhorted act joined the sign, such that the exterior operation of the will constitutes a

synthesis of phenomena."

It can be agreed with Blondel that when coaction has produced its effect the result is a self-sufficient whole. Action is more than the work itself. It can also be said that beyond every particular end there is a more general end. Therefore one can very well say that what I have done to myself with the concurrence of another is no longer for me alone or for others alone. The question is posed at this point. Is there a secret ambition of the will that is hiding? Blondel answers yes. The work that is born and delivered through the concurrence becomes an object wherein we learn to see ourselves.

Blondel states that "action is the mirror that offers us a visible image of our characters".⁷⁷ The end does not close up nor does desire come to an end. What we do, we still do for something other than what we think. Thus, as Blondel says, there is "a hidden surplus in the intention".⁷⁸ This enfolded tendency is again rounded in the result. Action had flowed into an immediate sign, then it pursued a determinate end and made of it a work. But beneath this work there subsists a broader need that is beginning to look for its satisfaction in it. Therefore, by the result of collaboration man is called upon to will the very intimacy of the worker and the collaborator. Blondel says that "the consummated action ... detaches itself from us".⁷⁹ This action begins to behave independently and now has an impersonal life. Blondel remarks that this tendency can be seen more clearly if we examine the phenomena of art.

Art, maintains Blondel, seems to have an "absolute selfsufficiency".⁸⁰ In fact, says Blondel, "it seems to live, to be not just the reflection of an idea, but a real idea, to truly have the power of being, of acting, and of loving".⁸¹ Therefore, in every human work there is a "nascent mysticism".⁸² All in all, the work attains a status of autonomy and therefore surpasses the individual life from where it took root.⁸³

Blondel maintains that we act voluntarily in the universe only because action has to have a universal bearing.

As Blondel points out "the realized act has an impersonal character and an independent evolution that is the literal fact whose interior inspiration had to be found".¹¹⁴ Unity and solidarity persists throughout. By drawing us out of ourselves, action is for others so that, in return, others may "be" for us. Action is the social cement and the soul of common life in the same manner that it was for the living organism.¹¹⁵

From the moment an act is willed, "it is implicitly addressed to everything that can understand and will".¹¹⁶

Blondel, therefore, insists that action is the

"multiplication of the interior word which, decked out in a body in order to offer itself to all sensibilities, proposes itself in communion with the universe, and spreads in it to infinity its fecundating seed".¹¹⁷ Blondel also points out

that all the signs, works and productions of man have their

"living summary" in language.¹¹⁸ As such, "language is the manipulable, animated, intellectualized equivalent of the

entire universe".¹¹⁹ Therefore, "full of light and mystery",

words, "never render all of the interior word and they always surpass it".¹²⁰ Again, in Blondel's words, words "form the

intellectual atmosphere of spirits".¹²¹ In summary, we can

say that voluntary action manifests an implicit intention but

beyond the individual act and particular object it aspires

to, it takes on a universal character. Therefore, action

tends to approach, reach and penetrate other consciousnesses.

The work is not just the product or the effect but rather, it is the instrument and the bond of a real union between consciousness that is naturally isolated one from the other. In truth we all penetrate into one another.

It is obvious from Blondel that the constituted work includes more than the clear image that is depicted in consciousness. In fact, it manifests what remains obscure in us. As Blondel points out, all great works, whether of science, art or virtue belong to the universe by view of the fact that these works surpass individual consciousness. And, because these works always surpass the vision of the author, the initial will remains immanent. Therefore,

L'action est donc efficace et par ce qu'elle a de total et par ce qu'elle a de partiel, par ce qui est clair en elle et par ce qui est obscur, par son idée et par son corps, par la nécessité du déterminisme et par les suggestions de la vie spontanée; par l'originalité de son invention et par le principe universel qui rend toute idée accessible à tout esprit.

Action "transforms and resurrects" the first intention in more original ways. Action is a social function, a reformation and therefore to act is to evoke other selves. Is there a secret willing in this? Blondel answers.

Quand j'agis sur d'autres esprits par l'enseignement, ou si je donne un ordre c'est ma pensée même que je prétends retrouver comme mon oeuvre en autrui: Je veux que l'action de mon disciple ou de mon ouvrier se calque sur la mienne; je demande que leur initiative se soumette et se substitue à mon opération. Je leur transmets tout ce que je puis de mon activité propre, pour que leur production soit identique à celle que je rêve ou que j'obtiens moi-même. C'est une conformité parfaite à mon dessein, c'est un redoublement complet de ma vie intime que j'attends d'eux. Je suscite un autre moi. Et c'était bien à ce terme que, dès le

début, tendait mon action: car si toute oeuvre recèle une force latente d'expansion, qu'y a-t-il de plus naturel que ce besoin de revivre en d'autres, ce besoin de disciples, ce besoin d'auxiliaires capable d'opérer pour nous comme nous? Il semblait tout à l'heure que j'attendais des forces brutes une originalité d'action: il semble maintenant que je demande aux forces intelligentes une passivité d'imitation et d'obéissance.

What is sought is the compliment of oneself which is active and capable of initiative. Basically, we wish to place ourselves in others as we are or we will, that others be ourselves and yet we will that they remain themselves. Blondel maintains that once the act has propagated itself from one's resolution to the sign, it returns in the opposite direction to the reflected life of one's witness to solicit from him an initiative, complicity. There is, as Blondel points out, filiation and transmission because of the universal bearing of action. In short, the intention that is put into practice is erected into a universal maxim.

Social Wills

From Blondel's point of view we can say that individual life needs an other in order to complete oneself. A person gives himself in order to find once more all that he already was. He expands outwardly, in order to read the signs but there always occurs an exchange from life to life. From two beings there is formed a same fecundity and as such there is constituted what Blondel calls a "coenergy" (coénergie).²⁰ This is not a mere cooperation. It is more

than that. It is a real society, a "single existence in its very multiplicity".⁹⁹ It is a community which functions as a "proliferating organism".¹⁰⁰ What has happened in the itinerary of the will is that the expansion has developed into what Blondel calls a "federation of wills".¹⁰¹ The center of equilibrium of individual life has shifted into the social milieu and here Blondel divides society, for the sake of his exposition, into three modes of collective individuality, namely, family, country, and humanity.

Always, underneath the spontaneous development - Blondel uncovers the movement of the will. This, as usual throughout, must be kept in mind as the phenomenological concern shifts from the individual into that of a larger phenomenon, namely, the intersubjective and interpolitical. As we have seen the dialectic elsewhere, here the same procedure of the deployment of the will takes place. Each of the diverse social groups constitutes itself, closes itself up and again opens up in order to pass on to the next order and so forth. What is important to ask is what is the subject, not in what he produces (the object) but in his intimacy? What is infinite and incommunicable about him? Until now there has been a concern of the subject as a means but now that concern shifts to one of the subject as an end. Here it is no longer a question of aligning him as part to the whole or whole to the part but the relation is as part to part within a whole to which the individual is devoted.

Blondel begins to argue that society does not rest on a play of signs, nor a calculus of useful forces, nor on economic laws, facts etc ... but that it implies the active union of the subjects themselves.¹⁰² It begins by wanting this unknown force that collaborates with me to be a subject analogous to myself, to be an ally, an helper, a friend. One wants to be the other without ceasing to be oneself and as Blondel says, "he really is only if he is for me as he is for himself".¹⁰³ To recognize a subjective life like myself to exist outside myself, I must, by an implicit act of will, "place under the sensible signs and the apparent works the invisible presence of another will".¹⁰⁴ Altruism is no less necessary than egoism. In fact, Blondel suggests that altruism is in conformity with the intimate wish of one's will. One cannot be oneself, as one wills to be, except, by placing oneself in another.

Although, it is "ever and always" one will, namely, my personal will, which is in search of itself it must defend itself against an immediate return to egoism.¹⁰⁵ What one wishes from another is what is incommunicable about him. One is drawn to this mystery and this infinite in this other's life because one penetrates him less. I penetrate myself more than him, therefore I seek out his irreducible subjectivity. But how can union between two subjectivities be sealed? Blondel answers that each must propose an end higher than each taken in isolation. The unity of two subjects must be

more than the sum of the two subjects in isolation. This surplus must spill over and engender a work that becomes its "raison d'être". The synthesis, of course, is always transcendent to the elements. If man is "an end in himself" it is in view of a higher development, higher than that in mutual isolation. For Blondel there is no social statics because in human relations everything is in action, born of action and flows into action. Thus, progress can be acquired only by social synthesis.¹⁰⁶ In this manner, "family spirit, social consciousness, group spirit, body of a nation" do not refer to the sum of parts but rather to a living synthesis.¹⁰⁷ In this way, Blondel maintains that "voluntary action is ... the bond that builds up the city of man".¹⁰⁸ Action cements society and we are held together by action. According to Blondel each family, country, nation comes to be through a particular and precise will and this will continues to seek its completion and this constitutes "not willing to remain alone in order to be more one".¹⁰⁹

The Bond of Love

In his treatment of love and friendship Blondel begins by stating that what we aspire to with regards to others is their affection, their will, their action. But Blondel argues that the vague and general desire of union with others is not enough. What Blondel wishes to say is that

all social action is like a generation because "it proceeds from the need we feel to extend our will into another".¹¹⁰ We will for an enrichment and in Blondel's scheme, this movement of expansion pauses at three junctions: the family, the country and humanity.

At this point we may remark that it is Blondel's contention that all the finite ends have not been able to satisfy the desire that thrusts man out of himself in his quest of a response equal to his call. Voluntary action of the free choice has not been able to match the desire or the primordial will. What can satisfy at this point can only come from another self, who like himself, is incommunicable and impenetrable. This occurs when a life alien to his own is offered and the wish to enter this life and form with it a separated world and to enclose himself in it as in a totality and independent universe is called love, according to Blondel, whether it is exclusive, jealous and passionate.¹¹¹

It is important to note, here, that it is only by following its development and unravelling its secret aspiration can we discern the design of a fecund will under the fascination of voluptuousness. Blondel notes, at first, that the tenderness and devotion which a solitary ego cannot provide for itself is willed by the love of one another. This is a question of an egoism-for-two that loses sight of itself.¹¹² For this love-for-two, each party seems ready to sacrifice all the individual life it has. This intimacy is

desired only for itself and the loved-one is set apart from the world. In this case, only one's lover seems to be real. One is blind to all else because "they are the ones who seem first to expel others from the world, ready to sacrifice all the rest to this nothing that they are in the same immensity of their souls, so that this nothing may be for them all the rest"¹¹² Between two lovers, says Blondel, there is no relation because there is only one. Ultimately, in this love-world nothing is general or common yet everything is particular and to the one who feels it and inspires it, it is infinite. The heart, writes Blondel, is ready to "divinize the meagre reality which it thinks it holds alone and entirely for eternity".¹¹³ Thus Blondel states that love is a "tyrannical and voluntary blindness, which transfigures the obscure idol in order to see it, to see it better, by closing its eyes"¹¹⁴ What the lover wishes to see is a perfect unity, exclusive and indissoluble perpetuity. This is why, in Blondel's view, that reason and passion conspire together an indivisible, perfect union. Because of its immense need for love, the will aspires to unity, the totality, the eternity of the bond it forms. Whole to whole is the relation. In addition, it may be said that the relation aspires to monogamy. What the will loves in the loved one is not just what one experiences through the senses and what one knows and understands about the other; it is also the "reality which is obscure, unconscious, impenetrable, the

fecund infinite which the loved one hides in himself and which he manifests in the whole of himself".¹¹ However, fetishism, which clings to a single detail in order to make it the object of cult is unhealthy love. True love embraces the total person and as Blondel says, "it is monotheistic".¹² It is not enough to say "one heart in two bodies" because love unites loving wills and minds that understand and penetrate one another.¹³ But it also melts the hidden and unknown parts from which acts originate, where the will has embodied itself. But does their common action close the circle of their will? Is it the end of desire? Blondel answers no. When they are one they become three. That very action which seemed the end and the perfection of the world, now opens up broader horizons for that "insatiable ambition of desire".¹⁴ That perpetuity, the indissoluble and surviving unity becomes now the child.

Blondel argues that in the absolute moment, in that total sufficiency and in that eternity of a moment, the will is already beyond itself.¹⁵ The will wants the soul of the loved one to produce a body. The third is no longer love; it is born of love. It is a manifestation of love's power and infinity. At this moment, the united lovers no longer will to be all for one another. Thus the end of love is not love but the family.¹⁶ In this way man outlives himself as a whole. The child is the synthesis.

What the will was seeking beyond egoistical and

voluptuous satisfaction is the common work of their power, their incarnate love, the visible and the real image of their life. The will sought "the expression of what in each one seems ineffable and inaccessible".¹²² The will, consistent with its own law transports itself into the child and it is the child who grounds the indissoluble unity. We want to outlive ourselves, because we pass away and die. We cannot capture between the two lovers, argues Blondel, the infinite movement of willing.¹²³ The child remains forever the pledge of the indivisible union. Therefore, as Blondel puts it, the child "is the indelible sign of what was willed by reason in love with unity and eternity in concert with the sincere passion that wants only to be exclusive and perpetual".¹²⁴ The child remains the permanent means by the education they give him, of moving on to their destiny. They have unlimited duty toward the child and they have the responsibility of realizing in him what is best in them. They are, as such, both superior and subordinate to the child. Love, therefore, while it proceeds from individual wills and surpasses the individual, requiring generosity and self-abnegation.¹²⁵ This is because the child makes himself the center of the family which is his world. It is here in this family-world that the child undergoes his social apprenticeship and it is here that he comes to a consciousness, a will of a society.. In this way, the family serves as a school preparing him for the collective life.

Blondel reminds us how an important moment it is, in the history of the child's thinking and feeling, when he becomes aware that he is not alone, that there are others and that the world does not revolve around him.¹¹⁰

Political Action

Blondel points out that the bonds that unite the members of one country is not the same as that which ties the family together. Blondel argues here that the solidarity of citizens is not explained by an extension of domestic ties.¹¹¹ Blondel believes that in the body of a whole nation "there flows one life and one will, as in a single organism, all of whose parts seemed tied by a mutual relation of finality".¹¹² The nation is not the mirror reflection of the family nor is it a prolongation of domestic society. This is because society is a homogeneous unit, connecting the closest relative to the most distant compatriote. Therefore society is "a distinct organism" because "the light that goes out from the will, eager to spread itself abroad, instead of spreading beyond the limits of the political whole, begins there to reflect back and to return upon itself as if it had met the term it was tending toward. Patriotism comes before the feeling for humanity and surpasses familial affections, like an original synthesis defined between the two".¹¹³ But what need does national unity respond to? Blondel answers that the secret of social life lies in the intimacy of

personal life which displays how we are led to will the confines of the political whole. Blondel also goes on to say that no matter how broad action may become it is always the same will that animates all its unfolding and which spreads itself out to better itself. The centrifugal movement finds its meaning only through centripetal movement.¹³⁰ The will's first interest is, after each conquest, to consolidate itself to exclude precisely what it is destined to deploy later. It opens up only to absorb and close back on itself; determinism becomes a freedom that further becomes a higher determinism.

Then, it is clear that just as the conjugal bond excludes the universe from the loving embrace (its value comes from its isolation of the crowd), it is quite the same for the national feeling. Hence, for Blondel, the plurality of cities is analogous to the plurality of persons. In the same way that a movement of the will leads us to desire that there exists outside of ourselves one or many wills which would unite with ours, while remaining distinct, so too that we will a city that is limited and that there be a world foreign to it outside its borders. Each country is loved from the inside as long as aliens remain aliens. But each people absorbs the thought of other nations and puts back into circulation a new richness. The operation of action is similar, therefore, for society as it was for the solitary organism, the individual. Blondel writes,

Ici donc se retrouve encore la loi dont on a remarqué l'application dans toute la suite des synthèses qu'en se déployant a formées l'action, et dont le sens s'éclaire peu à peu. Chaque fois que la volonté s'est proposé une fin nouvelle, elle a été amenée à considérer les fins antérieures auxquelles elle s'était arrêtée comme insuffisantes ou même illusoires. Mais en touchant au terme convoité, elle s'aperçoit que cette fin nouvelle est, elle aussi transitoire: elle comprend mieux désormais comment les étapes précédentes étaient, en dépit de l'instabilité qu'elle y rencontrait, des conditions nécessaires et des points relativement fixes, dans le progrès de son expansion. Ainsi voit-elle que, loin de s'exclure, les synthèses successives qui paraissent ordinairement se contredire, se supposent; que chacune est à la fois une fin et un moyen: et qu'en toutes il y a un système arrêté, un caractère originale, une détermination précise. En sorte qu'on ne va d'une de ces synthèses à une autre, qu'en passant d'un équilibre défini à un autre équilibre défini. Il n'y a, en effet, progrès possible dans l'organisation de la vie où de l'action qui si chaque point successif fournit un appui solide et si, à chaque degré du développement, le système formé est déterminé moins par l'addition des parties que par une nouvelle idée d'ensemble. D'où, le besoin d'insérer dans chaque forme de la vie personnelle ou collective une apparence d'absolu: de même que d'instinct on attribue au lien nuptial un caractère sacré comme pour en assurer la solidité, d'instinct aussi on consacre la patrie, on sanctifie le drapeau; comme si l'enceinte de la cité enveloppait le ciel et la terre, et le ciel plutôt encore que la terre. Il y a donc une sorte de mysticisme spontanée, qui permet à la volonté de s'arrêter à des étapes successives, comme si chacune était la fin; car en chacune elle met, au moins provisoirement, l'illusion de l'infini dans le fini. même.¹²¹

The political arena has a relative sufficiency, it seems, and is a necessary organization. Power is forever the expression of the profound will that grounds the nation itself. Power is the "substantial form" and the synthetic bond of the nation and therefore a society cannot be merely just any society because it is grounded on an "absolutely concrete will".¹²² It has an original and individual

character. Just as there are organs in the body, so too are there organized and living associations in society. Again, for Blondel, the idea of the whole determines the nature of the elements yet the principle of the synthesis is at the bottom of each personal will. Therefore, the very force that actualizes society and each citizen resides in each individual. Blondel maintains that "society seems to be constituted under the action of an end transcending the individual only to procure for the individual the reassurance of that higher power from which each derives all the benefit".¹²² The will, says Blondel, creates social life. But Blondel also maintains that society is not possible without an authority that is capable of moving and regulating this society. However, this authority and power which is beyond the reach of human arbitrariness and because it corresponds to a fundamental aspiration, is determined by man. Man designates, accepts or becomes the keeper of this power. However, authority is necessary, hence, power has to be constituted, that is, government has to be determined. The consequences that follow are that society is willed and necessary, that societies are above every human will and finally, that it is up to the concurrence of human wills to recognize and ratify power.¹²³ Power is higher than the nation yet it is subordinate to it in the same way, as we saw, that parents are higher than the child yet it is their duty to be subordinate to the child. Accordingly, power is

constituted for the nation. Blondel states the issue this way:—

Dans la vie politique, le pouvoir, à cause de son origine; est au-dessus de ceux mêmes qui l'ont constitué: car il n'est pas la somme des volontés individuelles ou l'expression des forces communes; il n'a pas révocable ad nutum; point de simple délégation, mais une puissance réglée et régulatrice qui demeure une propriété personnelle à chacun, même quand elle est exercée par un seul. Et de-même qu'une volonté conséquente exige l'unité et l'indissolubilité de la vie domestique, de même encore elle maintient le fait toujours singulier des institutions publiques réformables sans doute et perpétuellement en mouvement, mais au-dessus des atteintes légitimes de chacun de ceux qui les animent de leur vouloir. Ainsi le pouvoir n'est ni une somme de volontés arbitraires, ni une formule abstraite indifféremment applicable à tous les peuples: toujours il a pris forme concrète, toujours il demeure fondé sur une volonté antérieure aux conventions artificielles et mobiles.

We can see now in Blondel's view the political organization manifests an "intimate and personal will" and therefore the "State is at first an end with regard to the individual only to be a means afterwards".¹⁰⁰ Again, we emphasize the similarity whereby in the organic system one stimulus is an end for all the rest (eg. a pinprick arouses the entire body), in the ordered society a single person bears within him all the power and egoism of the social body. Thus power insures solidarity and communion of the parts. In this way we can see that common consciousness appears at the head of the political organism before it spreads throughout the body. Each citizen can inspire; national consciousness is not a sum of parts - the citizen is truly the "living political whole" because in him "resides virtually the power, and the action of

all".¹²⁷ Blondel summarizes the operation in this way:

Ainsi la volonté du citoyen anime et absorbe en elle tout l'organisme social: elle en détermine le caractère toujours concret; elle en forme une synthèse originale comme le sont les espèces vivantes et les races distinctes dans le monde animal; et quelle que soit l'unité d'origine ou les lois générales des sociétés, chacune est une nation singulière. C'est la patrie, parce qu'elle procède d'un amour personnel à chacun de ses membres et parce que l'amour s'attache toujours à ce qui est unique. Sans doute la vie nationale a ses prolongements au delà de la frontière; pour elle, comme pour tout organisme, les fonctions d'assimilation et désassimilation sont un principe de renouvellement perpétuel. Elle n'en reste pas moins une individualité définie, même en face des synthèses ultérieures et des extensions nouvelles de l'action humaine.¹²⁸

Man's will and his action does not stop at the edge of the country - it aspires beyond it. The political is the symbol of the interior life of the will that spreads out and man also aspires to espouse humanity and form one will with it. As Blondel puts it, "individual life ... tends to become identical with universal life", or again, "this general and impersonal will seems to become concentrated in each consciousness".¹²⁹ As social life progresses, a feeling of humanity develops in man's mind, something unheard of in antiquity, Blondel reminds us. For ancient philosophy, the central effort had been to conceive, define and will the city. Morality and religion became subordinate to the city. Everything was subordinated to politics; the city was the "universal consummation"; only with the Jewish people did the patriotic cult coincide with the religious cult. But from the childhood of civilization, where the individual knows only his family and where family limited its horizon to the

political life of the city, moral ideas have advanced. Man's relation stretched beyond his family, his friend. Little by little, action has "incorporated the family and the city to take flight into humanity as a whole".¹⁴⁰ Action becomes what it wills; it wills to be by free choice, what it is already by the thrust of its first élan Blondel writes.

Si donc on semble lui imposer, comme une loi, l'obligation de s'ériger elle-même en maxime universelle; si l'on commande à chacun d'agir avec l'intention de faire ce que tous doivent faire; si il faut avoir le sentiment de porter, en son action particulière, la volonté et l'action des autres, ce n'est là que la traduction, non pas seulement de ce qui doit être pour la volonté délibérée et voulue, mais de ce qui est déjà pour la volonté voulante et opérante. Quoi qu'on fasse, en effet, l'humanité est intéressée à l'action de chacun comme à un nouvel élément de l'équilibre générale: l'action dont l'homme s'attribue l'origine est celle qui pourrait arriver sous le nom de l'espèce entière.¹⁴¹

Thus, in willing and acting man goes beyond the family, and the political to involve humanity. But Blondel insists, that we cannot and do not will to live only for ourselves, for what is ours and for our fellow citizens - action also crosses over the boundaries of the "human federation".¹⁴²

Natural Morality and Natural Religion

Willing of Morality

It may be a good idea to recall at this point that we have seen the will transporting the center of its intention into organic operations, from organic operations into work, from work into the intimacy of the other's will, from love into the love of family, country and humanity. But

the will does not stop there. It is insatiable. It wishes to go beyond. For the will it is now a question of "accepting and embracing what surpasses our foresight, our comprehension, our free disposition; of recognizing, under the interplay of phenomena, the inaccessible forces that produce them".¹⁴³ In addition to this it is also a question of "consenting to receive from this mysterious power, which the positive sciences admit but do not encroach upon, the obscure dictates and the inspirations of moral experience".¹⁴⁴ Even beneath voluntary morality we find the necessary expansion and result of the initial willing.

Blondel insists that in order to bring back Naturalist morality to its true meaning, it is necessary to consider it from two angles. In the first place, through the effect of an experimentation "action receives a posteriori the lessons of the milieu wherein it unfolds" - it undergoes the reactions of the universal milieu and from this interplay of the organism, a conscience is formed; in addition, it may be said that the secular tradition of practical rules is established, hence, human morality.¹⁴⁵ In the second place, we can say that this fact of human morality now becomes the "consciousness of duty" - "this constrained detachment is the way to an intentional disinterestedness; this a posteriori necessity results from the a priori movement of the will".¹⁴⁶ According to Blondel what this means is that moral ideal emerges from practical empiricism under the

influence of an inner aspiration.¹⁴² To put it more concretely we can say that action involves taking a risk, one in which the result may be unfulfillment and tragedy. We are ready and willing to suffer from the consequences of our action and by trial and error, society makes up practical rules of conduct, hence, a moral tradition. It may also be said that rules and axioms are characterized by the notion of duty, an impersonal command which may exhort us to action with "little promise of a tangible recompense".¹⁴³

Therefore we are not asked to act blindly because every society has its "folk morality" or, to put it differently, a distillation of the collective experience of a nation.

Blondel writes,

C'est ainsi que de l'épreuve de la vie sortent des maximes, des préceptes empiriques, des 'moralités' populaires qui semblent résumer la sagesse des siècles et des nations. Déterminer avec plus de précision et de rigueur la loi des répercussions nécessaires et les conséquences des actes humains; expliquer la formation des notions morales qui ont cours en un temps et dans un pays; en régler le mouvement et en hâter le progrès par la conscience même qu'elle en prend, tel est l'objet de la science des mœurs; morale vraiment scientifique, qui, indépendamment de tout recours à la liberté et de toute vue d'obligation particulière, se fonde sur le déterminisme des actions et des réactions totales.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, in order for it to take on a scientific character, the science of morals must take the viewpoint of the whole, the totality, the "immensity of things".¹⁵⁰

Action, Blondel points out, is a call and an echo from the infinite - it comes from the infinite and it goes to the infinite.¹⁵¹ Science can only be founded on "a real experimentation" and morals do not have their rule "in what

we know of ourselves, in what we are clearly conscious of willing and doing, but in themselves".¹⁵² Blondel,

therefore, sees the necessity of sheltering science from empirical sanctions, rationalizing reason (raison

raisonneuse) and fantasies of individuals.¹⁵³ Blondel

considers logical deductions, clear and distinct ideas and over-simplifications to be dangerous in this regard. Indeed,

rational morality is not wisdom. However, he states that

"morality is the summation and the always provisional and changing conclusion not only of humanity, but of the entire universe".¹⁵⁴ Therefore, naturalist morality is "a slow

crystallization of the total experience ... of the meaning of universal life in me".¹³³ But the sense of duty is real because it is grounded on experience yet it is ideal because it is not reducible to any one set of facts or efficient cause because society is not an automaton "constructed by force of calculation and reflexion, but an organism".¹³⁴ Blondel here concludes that since the mechanism that generates the rules of naturalistic morality are unknown, "it follows that the sincere and constant will has no other recourse ... but to hand itself over in a way blindfolded to this great flow of ideas, feelings, moral rules that have emerged little by little from human actions through the strength of tradition and the accumulation of experiences".¹³⁵

Blondel maintains at this point that just as it was possible to explain the genesis of freedom, so is it possible to explain the production of this naturalistic morality. Indeed if there is in the consciousness of action more than in action itself and if the reason for a voluntary operation can be found only in the conception of an end distinct from its efficient cause, then this end also appears higher than those experiences which inspire it. Thus the "positive practice of life" projects before itself a should (devoir), ideal and real because it is grounded in a constituted experience and because within action it generates something which is irreducible to simple facts.

In summary, therefore, in following Blondel's logic, we can discern the following: in acting, the will seeks itself spontaneously (its first impulse) but in its pursuit it surrenders itself to the immense universe from which it may not profit and gain anything. In this search the will is constrained to detach itself from itself and between that wills and what is willed there is a chasm and under the most sincere disinterestedness there "subsists ... the fundamental ambition of the personal will".¹⁵⁰ As it is tied to the reality of the facts, the necessary resulting "conception of an ideal presents consciousness ... with a duty higher than the facts".¹⁵¹ Thus, in the same way that the determinism of efficient causes had presented us with an end, so too does the mechanism of life present us with a motive higher than the facts that prepared the consciousness of it. Action hangs from the end without which the means would not be intelligible. The will takes up within itself the universal reality: we become this determinism while individual action reaches into infinity. The entire order of nature enters into the field of man's experiences. Here the deep aspiration is unveiled. Man receives a posteriori what he was already soliciting a priori. What he seeks, therefore, is his self-interest but he crosses the universe without arriving at it. The result is that he loses interest in the universe. The universe appears ambiguous. Therefore, "something above" is needed to explain it and give it meaning. As such,

naturalist morality is insufficient. Man needs more than naturalistic morality. There has to be a morality from above.¹⁰⁰

Action needs to go beyond the order of nature in order to be satisfied - it requires another world. We need to seek beyond the natural in order to attribute meaning in the same way that the scientist seeks beyond brute facts to erect theory in order to see from above. Blondel maintains that this implicit metaphysics is necessary because, since the universe deceives us, we need to generate universal ideals to enlighten and regulate ~~action~~ action. However, these metaphysical notions are merely rungs in a series of ends pursued. But metaphysics is not god: "it is 'something' in the dynamic progress of the will."¹⁰¹ According to Blondel, then, metaphysical ideas are real, ideal and practical.¹⁰² How is this so?

Metaphysical ideas are real, then, because they grow out of our organic and social experience and they reflect the lessons of experience. Now, in the same way that the mechanisms of spontaneous life gives rise to finality that transcends those powers which produce it, so too in our life of reflection does something similar take place in the sense that we organize our life in reference to an ideal. It is the ideal that gives universality and unity to our acts. Blondel writes,

Dans la vie spontanée de la conscience, le mécanisme même des causes efficientes suscite, on l'a vu, une cause

finale, une cause qui, par son caractère synthétique, est en progrès sur les puissances encore aveugles dont elle s'empare à son profit. Dans le développement réfléchi de l'action volontaire, il se produit, d'une façon plus distincte, un semblable travail: du jeu même de la vie surgit une conception qui semble supérieure à la vie, comme un idéal objectif. S'il est vrai que la pratique humaine fournit la matière d'une science positive des mœurs et constitue une expérimentation sans laquelle les plus subtiles déductions demeureraient dans le vide, il devient nécessaire d'ajouter que notre conduite ne s'organise qu'en s'éclairant à une idée totale et qu'en projetant, sous la forme d'une fin dernière à atteindre, la raison complète de sa propre production.¹²²

But why do we need this unity in the total explanation?

Blondel answers that it is because science is abstract, partial and provisional while action is not. The more we achieve the more we tie it to a total principle. The totality of any action is inserted into the whole and this very unity is found in the consciousness of that whole. Thus Blondel insists that any deliberate action contains, at least, the beginnings of a metaphysics - "action is universalist".¹²³ Speculation and practice are always ahead or behind of one another. They do not come together and equal one another. All thought is really a metaphysics. Blondel puts the matter this way:

Et la conception de cette finalité idéale manifeste, non pas l'insuffisance ou la pénurie d'une volonté besogneuse, mais la surabondance d'une vie intime qui ne trouve pas, dans l'univers réel, à s'employer toute. Cet ordre métaphysique n'est point hors du vouloir comme une fin étrange à atteindre; il est en lui comme un moyen de passer outre. Il ne représente pas une vérité déjà constituée en fait, mais il place ce qu'on voudrait vouloir comme un objet idéal devant la pensée. Il n'exprime pas une réalité absolue et universelle, mais l'aspiration universelle d'une volonté particulière. Chaque pensée humaine est donc une métaphysique, et une métaphysique singulière et unique.¹²⁴

Of course, these "directive ideas of life" are formed in society, not constituted in each individual.¹⁴⁶ Blondel is of the opinion that as reflection comes to govern acts and thoughts more and more, life becomes better conformed to absolute rules. In this way abstract principles acquire more efficaciousness. But again, Blondel does not hesitate to point out that the principles reflect the "spontaneous tendencies and moral habits" of the individual who applies them.¹⁴⁷ While we believe that we are submitting to the truth, in fact, we are submitting it to our selves. In other words "we make ourselves our own truth" - Ideas influence practice and practice influences ideas. Although our most theoretical and impersonal ideas are derived from hidden moral dispositions, nonetheless, speculation upholds a certain independence and "its development is autonomous".¹⁴⁸ Blondel states the matter thus:

Mais, si les idées dont elle forme ses synthèses ont leurs racines dans la pratique, elles croissent au-dessus du sol dont elles sortent; elles servent à dégager la volonté de ses entraves; elles en expriment l'initiative et le progrès; elles lui offrent, sous la figure de notions régulatrices et 'objectives', le résumé des conquêtes faites, le symbole des conquêtes à faire, ce qu'elle veut déjà et ce qu'elle veut vouloir, ce qu'elle aspire à être et à acclimater dans la spontanéité croissante de la vie morale. à ce point de vue, la connaissance semble d'un degré en avance sur la réalité; et c'est la raison pour laquelle, au-dessus des faits donnés et connus, nous sommes amenés à construire cet ordre idéal qui les explique et qui est comme la vérité a priori de toutes choses.¹⁴⁹

It can be said that beneath abstractions, mediators have a keen sense of life, but the issue that is important is

to discern "the element common to every metaphysical enterprise".¹⁶⁸ What do these regulative ideas result in?

What role do these ideas play in life? According to Blondel, the point of the originality of metaphysics is "to prepare action to draw its true motive outside of everything already realized in nature or in the agent himself".¹⁶⁹

Furthermore, "it proposes to thought what is neither positive nor real, and proposes it as more real than the real, because that is what should be done, what is already included in the ambition of human willing".¹⁷⁰ Therefore Blondel can say that "it is one and the same will that leads man to involve in his action the whole of the real order, the same will that brings him to posit over the given reality a new reality and still the same will that inclines him to seek in this new order a direction and a practical rule".¹⁷¹ In addition, Blondel maintains that speculative conceptions express "the intimate sense and the profound orientation of the will".¹⁷² From this Blondel concludes that "metaphysics has its substance in the will".¹⁷³ Blondel presents the issue, saying that,


Il s'agit donc d'incorporer à l'action volontaire cet ordre idéal qui est la fin transcendente de l'ordre naturel; c'est-à-dire que la volonté est amenée à placer son centre d'équilibre hors de toute réalité donnée en fait, à vivre en quelque sorte sur elle-même, et à chercher en elle seule la raison purement formelle de son acte: ainsi c'est par ce qu'elle a d'irréel qu'elle va accroître sa fécondité.¹⁷⁴

Blondel asserts that there is "in voluntary action more than scientific knowledge, more than subjective life as it is

revealed by consciousness, more than the universal reality which naturalist morality or metaphysics itself feed upon".¹¹⁰ We need to look at this "something more" and discover what are the conditions and the exigencies of moral action.

At this point of the inquiry concerning the something that still subsists beyond even phenomena, we may ask: how does moral consciousness arise in man? If natural science prepares the way and metaphysical conceptions serve as antecedent conditions, how does there come about a "moral morality"? Thus far, Blondel has dealt with a naturalistic and a metaphysical morality corresponding respectively to an empirical science of facts and a science of universal principles beyond these facts that explain the facts. Within the science of mores we had seen an "outline of an ideal morality" and with regards to a metaphysical morality we saw a lack of the practical, therefore there is something left over after practical precepts had been subsumed in metaphysics. We see that every metaphysics must become an ethics with a practical end.¹¹¹

Duty, originally a sentiment or an attitude of the social milieu, with the help of metaphysics becomes, now, an obligation and an end in itself. No longer is it an ideal of an intellectualized ethics but it is now an imperative. Thus it is through "the mediation of an implicit metaphysics that duty appears to consciousness as a reality" and it is "in the



phenomenon of conscious obligation" that a "synthesis of the real and the ideal is effected".¹⁷⁷ To act morally we can "prescind from all human science other than conscience".¹⁷⁸ According to Blondel we need not ruin metaphysics to build up morality, instead we should "enthrone morality in metaphysics".¹⁷⁹ Blondel has Kant in mind when he says that,

La métaphysique sert donc à creuser un abîme entre la nature et la morale. Car une fois que la réflexion s'élève, par l'initiative même de la vie spontanée, à la conception d'un ordre idéal; une fois qu'on a compris que dans l'action humaine il y a plus que la nature entière ne peut fournir; une fois que la volonté prend possession de ce qui en elle est autonome et transcendant, ce n'est plus dans les faits réels, ni même dans les idées régulatrices de l'entendement que l'homme cherche l'appui et trouve la fin de sa conduite: c'est dans la pratique seule qu'il aspire à égaler l'ampleur de sa volonté agissante. Et, dès lors, l'action (loin de lui sembler un phénomène conditionné par une infinité d'autres antécédents, objectifs ou subjectifs peu importe) lui apparaît comme conditionnant tout le reste. Considérée à part des faits et des idées dans toute sa pureté, elle commande et produit les idées et les faits; elle s'organise librement; elle crée les organes de ses fonctions nécessaires.¹⁸⁰

Again, we can quote Blondel with an eye on Kant as he views the matter:

Qu'on ne parle donc plus de la suprématie de l'action et de l'autonomie souveraine de la volonté, comme s'il fallait, pour maintenir ce primat de la raison pratique, isoler l'action volontaire de la nature et rompre le lien de la pensée spéculative avec la pratique morale. C'est le contraire qui est vrai; il y a corrélation entre ce qu'on a trop souvent opposé. C'est en opérant dans la nature et en s'y cherchant elle-même que la volonté est amenée à placer hors de l'ordre réel, un système de vérités métaphysique; et c'est parce que ces conceptions recèlent encore une impénétrable virtualité, - impénétrable à la pensée qui s'y arrête, mais accessible au mouvement de l'action, - que la volonté s'affranchit, sans renier ses origines, et

poursuit librement, dans ce domaine nouveau, ses synthèses morales a priori.¹²¹

Thus Blondel maintains that the "distinction and the solidarity of the positive order, the metaphysical order and the moral order are a direct function of one another".¹²²

Blondel is therefore able to make the claim that our duties are found in what happens to us, not in what we imagine might have been.¹²³ Blondel is adamant about the mediation of action when he states that,

... c'est l'action effective qui est la grande médiatrice; elle réussit à concilier ce qui, au point de vue statique de la connaissance, pour une philosophie critique ou idéaliste, s'exclut formellement. D'une part en effet, c'est l'action qui, de la nature pratiquée et digérée, extrait l'ordre idéal par lequel s'exprime tout le surcroît du vouloir; d'autre part, c'est encore l'action qui, entre les idées régulatrices de l'entendement et les vérités morales, creuse le tunnel. De la nature à la pensée pure, de la pensée à la pratique, il y a donc passage ininterrompu. Ce sont là des phénomènes hétérogènes, mais solidaires.¹²⁴

Since moral action finds within itself "something" that comes neither from nature nor from thought, it becomes more and more aware of its relative autonomy. Therefore the issue is not a question of what the consciousness of obligation entails nor that of grounding this obligation on an absolute. What is at stake here is to explain what this consciousness of duty implies and grounds. It is little wonder, then, that the will projects before it, under the form of postulates, phenomena as "final causes and subsequent conditions of moral action".¹²⁵ The first practical truth required by voluntary action is the very definition of duty.

Of course, practical morality need not appeal to free will. It is something that is to be practiced; it is necessary. To be sure, nothing is more relative than the moral absolute but there does remain an absolute. In fact, there is an order to be upheld and this order is determined through the necessary sequence of successive conquests of the will. Thus, Blondel can say that "neither the form nor the actual matter of moral obligation is the expression of an imperative without roots in real life, of a mysterious and arbitrary commandment".¹⁸⁶ Therefore, in Blondel's view, duty is a necessary postulate of the will, not as the will posits itself at the beginning but in a way that it has unfolded itself through its expansion. Accordingly, then, from Blondel's position, duty is really an inevitable production of the will. As such, moral truths do not proceed from positive facts but rather that it is the phenomena that are linked to the reality of action. Action is the bond of successive syntheses.¹⁸⁷

Blondel pinpoints the central feature of his philosophy of action when he says that in this "ascending march", what appears as a necessary development of determinism, appears from the descending view of reflection, as a "hierarchy of obligatory relations and of duties to be consecrated by an accepted practice".¹⁸⁸ Blondel summarizes the universal extension of action in this manner:

Ainsi, par la croissance du germe que l'acte volontaire a semé, il se produit une assimilation de plus

en plus complète de la nature à la pensée et de la pensée à la volonté. Des phénomènes sensibles qu'étudient les sciences positives, de la vie intérieure de l'individu, de la cité, de la société humaines, de la solidarité universelle, de la république idéale des intelligences, du royaume moral des fins, il se forme un organisme, ou cette volonté s'est répandue pour en être l'âme, et ou, pour s'égaliser à elle-même, elle s'est élargie au point de devenir coextensive au tout et de placer son centre partout. En sorte qu'au lieu d'être le résultat ou du moins le résumé d'une nécessité antécédente, l'action humaine est, à ce point de vue encore provisoire, la raison de toute cette belle ordonnance. Le phénomène universel ne semble exister que pour devenir le théâtre de la moralité, ou mieux encore pour être le corps même de la volonté.¹⁸⁹

What Blondel is saying is that the will has embodied itself in the universe inasmuch as the universe was the original stimulus that made possible that very willing. The will of the body has extended itself to become the body of the will. Blondel continues to say that,

L'action volontaire a donc absorbé tout le reste, pour se façonner peu à peu des organes et se faire son univers. Où elle tend de plus en plus, c'est à l'accord du volontaire et du voulu: mentis et vitae, intelligentis et agentis, volentis et voliti adaequatio. En ce sens, les vérités morales en sont plutôt la conséquence que le principe. Comme on a déterminé par l'analyse les conditions de la connaissance scientifique, on est donc conduit à déterminer les conditions de l'activité morale.¹⁹⁰

Moral truths do not follow from principles. Moral truths follow from voluntary action. Moral truths are attained by acting and by being not by the application of formal rules. To make an analogy, we can say that we speak by speaking rather than by first learning the rules of grammar and syntax. A child first speaks and learns the language and it is only later that he learns the rules of grammar and syntax, from

which he may correct himself. Morality, therefore, comes from living not by following a preordered programme in a kind of automaton behavior.¹⁹²

At this point we may ask what is the common trait of moral activity? Blondel's answer is that the end from which reflected action feels the need to hang from is an "absolute, something independent and definitive that would be outside the sequence of phenomena, a real outside the real, a divine something".¹⁹³ The paradox that is suggested by Blondel is the fact that we can't draw from phenomena something other than phenomena yet we postulate something else. The postulate is a necessary affirmation but it differs from the premises. Blondel says that this exigency comes from the circumstances that "in the primitive elan of the will there is more than we have used".¹⁹⁴ Man, in his attempt to perfect himself, fabricates a god in order to absorb what escapes him infinitely because, as we have seen, the diverse forms of 'natural' morality (naturalist morality, metaphysical morality, moral morality) do not yet satisfy the exigencies of the will and do not equal the expanse of action. From the point of view of intention, 'natural' moralities seem irreconcilable and exclusive one to the other but from the point of view of action they are reconciled and disposed in tiers. Yet "something" still escapes man. Man seeks what is beyond phenomena because he is trying to make his action equal to his will. The last attempt at self-sufficiency will

be superstition.

Willing of Idolatry

Man, states Blondel, keeps seeking the perfect equation that would "establish a reciprocity between the necessary expansion and the return of a freedom always in progress" in spite of the "grandeur of science. consciousness, of affection, of ideas, or duties, there still remains a vacuum".¹¹⁷ Thus far, then, personal, social and moral life has not exhausted a "mysterious fecundity".¹¹⁸ Willing is a linear operation that turns back upon itself and stretches out infinitely, only to recoil finitely. Yet a need is ever present and because of this need, the willing of man sets up a belief which he adds to phenomena and presents it to himself "under the form of a symbol or an idol".¹¹⁹ This fabrication of an idol is the very attempt to complete and perfect a felt need; hence, at the heart of voluntary action "a mystery resides" and this ineffable residue is what man projects outside of himself and makes it the object of a cult.¹²⁰ One way of putting it is to say that man attempts to realize outside what escapes him inside. Blondel says that this is the aim to incarnate and crystallize this "infinite in the finite of a real object".¹²¹ This is basically the method of mastering the infinite, hence, cult is the "supreme effort to fill in the immense interval that separates the will from what it wants".¹²² The object of cult is the

mirror where the will reflects its own image in order to perfect itself and in this way action completes itself by opening "out to immensity".²⁰¹

Blondel's view is that the object of superstitious cult is the expression of an inexhaustible depth of the interior life which no act has yet satisfied. It truly expresses the desire for an infinite answer to an infinite willing and man's feeling of a subjective infinite is projected outwardly in order to envelop him and the totality of his life. Therefore cult returns from the object in order to complete action. From this Blondel argues that its transcendence can become "immanent to each particular action" in order to consecrate and stamp the seal of the infinite, the very infinite that man demands and needs, as shown by his infinite willing.²⁰² Blondel states,

Et, grâce à cette extension du cérémonial qui correspond à une plus claire conscience du caractère insondable de chaque action, l'idée même de l'objet sacré s'intellectualise aussi, elle s'humanise. Sous la pratique littérale s'insinue un esprit nouveau, le sentiment d'un dieu qui n'exige pas seulement un tribut, égoïste ou farouche tyran, mais qui attend des actions humaines qu'elles soient ce qu'elles doivent être, comme si leur parfaite et régulière exécution était nécessaire à sa propre perfection.²⁰³

If superstition intends to bring action to a full circle and make it a closed system such that "end and means" would be the same, the object of cult must return to "transfigure and perfect all the sketches of action and all the incomplete works".²⁰⁴ Blondel is of the opinion that all acts other than superstitious acts precede and prepare

superstitious action while in a deeper sense, ritual penetrates and grounds all other acts.

The individual, the family, the city, the universe are the feeding grounds where superstition flourishes. Yet, these forms or modes of life seem "suspended from the sacred art which was their end and becomes their principle, which contained their hidden spirit and which constitutes their seal, their letter, their cornerstone".²⁰⁵ Therefore, as Blondel maintains, "there is no 'ritual' without the family or the city, there is no family or solidly organized city without a consecration, without a mystical thought".²⁰⁶ From this Blondel claims that in every human act there is a beginning of "budding mysticity".²⁰⁷ Here Blondel reminds us that, when art breaks the monotony of daily life, we sacralize it - we become launched into the infinite; every important event arouses a feeling and an obsession, not just for the divine but with a ceremonial. Blondel writes,

Ainsi, à chaque progrès offensif de la réflexion, il semble que l'homme cherche à se dégager des entraînements spontanés qui le portaient naïvement hors de lui. Il est prêt à brûler ce qu'il adorait, dès qu'il croit s'être au-dessus. Ce qu'il paraît poursuivre d'instinct, c'est sa propre apothéose. Afin de réduire l'objet de son culte, afin de n'avoir d'autres devoirs religieux que ses devoirs humains, n'a-t-il pas pris place lui-même sur l'autel? Et n'a-t-on pas vu, comme d'instructives ébauches, l'avènement messianique de la Raison ou l'essai d'une religion positive de l'Humanité?²⁰⁸

Blondel warns us that superstition insinuates itself into all the forms of practice, thought, science, metaphysics, art and natural morality. What occurs is a fashioning of an ideal. Rather than appearing as an end,

religion is but a means and in this manner, man adores nothing but himself. To be sure, idols are everywhere and in Blondel's estimate, they come under the headings of "the Unknowable, universal solidarity, the social organism, the country, love, art, science".-- We notice, then, how Blondel addresses himself to "the new mysticism" and its protestation with an eye on Kant, Hegel and Comte.-- Blondel argues that while this "new mysticism" thinks itself irreligious, it is in fact the very display of orthodox devotion.--

The religious disposition of the "new mystics" seems to be essentially of two attitudes. In the first place, it believes that there is no act where one does not feel something of an intoxication and salutary exaltation. In the second place, there is no act where one does not feel that the object of devotion is finite and null. What this amounts to is that the more void an act is, the more satisfied and sufficient is the subjective pole. Again, the dandy, the dilettante, in order to adore himself, adores nothing.-- Therefore, acting for the sake of acting is the superstition of those who want nothing. Blondel summarizes the decadent attitude:

Loin donc de chercher à se fonder sur la suffisance de quoi que ce soit, la volonté triomphe de l'insuffisance de tout: elle adore ce qui lui échappe et la dépasse à jamais; elle est divine, durant qu'elle vit, qu'elle aime, qu'elle produit, qu'elle se dépense, même stérilement: à tous les actes superstitieux qui prétendaient atteindre et fixer l'absolu, ne survit que la superstition de l'action et la foi du devenir, mieux

encore l'amour de ce qui ne peut être fait ni touché, de ce qui n'est pas et ne sera pas réel. On avait voulu concentrer toute la réalité des choses dans l'action humaine et la faire participer à la solidité de tout ce qui est, semble-t-il, sans elle. N'est-elle pas au contraire le rêve qui dévore la substance des phénomènes, le gouffre où s'abîme toute apparence d'existence? et n'aurions-nous parcouru ce long circuit de l'enquête scientifique que pour revenir au point de départ, au vide?²¹³

In short, we have here the conviction that they can make a god without God. Man clings to this "last idol" in order to feel "fully self-sufficient".²¹⁴ Superstitious action is the last frontier in Blondel's phenomenology. But man's superstitious action, also, does not suffice the ultimate élan of the will. At this point the tone of L'Action changes dramatically. It leads to a problematic conclusion and as Blondel puts it,

A traverser l'immense champ du phénomène, l'homme n'a gagné qu'à dégager plus clairement un mystère qui survit à l'usage, en apparence complet, de toutes ses puissances. Ce reliquat n'est point à ajouter à l'action voulue, il y est déjà; et, en le posant, la volonté d'où procède l'acte en exige l'emploi. Vainement essaie-t-on de le consacrer par un rite à l'objet fictif d'un culte idolâtrique. Vainement prétend-on le sceller dans chacune des actions qu'on marque d'un caractère sacré, ou le déposer comme un pesant embarras dans quel-qu'un des phénomènes dont ce besoin caché nous avait fait sentir l'inanité. Vainement, à mesure que la conscience renonce à la chimérique ambition de le confisquer, veut-on n'adorer que l'inconnaissable et l'inaccessible. De toutes ces tentatives, il ne ressort que cette conclusion doublement impérieuse: il est impossible de ne pas reconnaître l'insuffisance de tout l'ordre naturel et de ne point éprouver un besoin ultérieur; il est impossible de trouver en soi de quoi contenter ce besoin religieux. C'est nécessaire; et c'est impraticable. Voilà, toutes brutes, les conclusions du déterminisme de l'action humaine.²¹⁵

Therefore the problem of human action at this stage is {that

one ends up not being able to satisfy oneself - a faith of "forced blindness".²¹⁶ Blondel maintains that mystical irreligiosity is also a superstition, when from the powerlessness of the human will and the devotions of fetishisms and from the false mysticism of science it concludes the impossibility of any ulterior revelation.

Blondel states his views thus:

La prétention qu'a l'homme de se borner aux phénomènes et de se suffire est donc radicalement inconsequente. En la posant, il la dément et la dépasse. Se fonder sur l'action infirme et incomplète pour admettre l'infirmité irrémédiable de l'action; ériger un fait en vérité définitive et exclusive, c'est, sans paraître y toucher, le dénaturer. Dans l'ordre des phénomènes il n'y a point de contradiction ni d'exclusion, point de possibilité ou d'impossibilité; il y a simplement des faits déterminés. Or, dès l'instant que de ces faits l'on prétend tirer une négation qui porte sur la possibilité même d'autres faits, on sort de la science et des faits. Superstitieux, les plus impies.²¹⁷

Blondel concludes that man cannot equal his own exigencies; there is more in man than he can use by himself. The conclusion suggests that whether, without religion or with one that he fashions himself, man is incapable of satisfying his "necessary need and his voluntary exigencies"²¹⁸ Again and again, man's attempt to bring human action to completion fails. human action has the need to complete itself but it cannot. The gap between the volonté voulue and the volonté voulante cannot be closed and cannot be filled it seems. At every turn, every phenomenon is unfulfilling, and does not suffice yet man wills infinitely and forever keeps falling back into phenomena. The infinite willing only reaches the

finite and when man tries to turn the infinite into a
accessible finite object in superstitious action, his needs
are not satisfied: he keeps willing for more. The adequation
of the self with itself is never reached. Yet action thrusts
us forward even against our will: our willing determines us to
will further on, beyond, infinitely. We can say at this
point that the immense order of phenomena upon which man's
life is spread has been exhausted by Blondel's "method of
residues". Yet human willing is not exhausted: it still
requires completion. The pretension of self-sufficiency is
aborted and what remains is always higher than what is willed
or reached: it beckons us onward. Human willing is
irreconcilable to itself: the natural order cannot measure up
to man's infinite willing and needs.

Beneath human action, then, there lies a desire to find in phenomena more than phenomena. But this more can be found neither in the world of objects nor in the subject. Yet the urgency always remains. According to Blondel this very "something" is at the heart of willing - "It is necessary; and it is impracticable". This method of residues employed by Blondel leads therefore, to the conclusion of an irreducible surplus. Its scientific validity, in Blondel's mind, lies not with its facticity, but with the necessity, once the whole range of determinism have been explored.

Here Blondel ends his phenomenological exploration to shift into the more Pascalian French tradition. Before we go on we need at this point to recapitulate what has been said. At the very beginning Blondel had set forth the moral problem of life in terms of becoming or human destiny. This was done in order to trace the phenomena of human existence from the birth of the organism to the emergence of human consciousness and from there to scientific consciousness, social consciousness, political consciousness until we arrive at moral and religious consciousness, all the while, hermeneutically pointing beneath and above phenomena the failure of an explicit will to satisfy the desires of an implicit will. The concern with willing came out of the debate regarding the soteriological solution presented by the nihilist and the dilettante from the pessimistic viewpoint of

human life, which Blondel refuted because any option negative or positive always demands a willing. This facticity of willing was taken up to display the mediating activity of action and what was refuted at this point was any one-sided position of either a Kant or a Spinoza. Finally, after all has been said and done, we return once more to the problem of human destiny in, however, a different form. Is this all there is to action? At this point we have reached the absurdist position of a Camus or the endless willing of a Kafka.²² For Blondel there is "something" to hope for - this "something" is necessary but it is inaccessible to our willing. At this point an ethics grounded on the inadequation of the self with itself, or the will-willed and the will-willing is an existential ethic best exemplified by a Camus or a Kafka. But for Blondel, ethics cannot be grounded apart from the religious or the supernatural. This will be the concern from this point onward.

Willing and Transcendence

The Bankruptcy of the Will

We may point out that we will in order to be self-sufficient, yet we cannot be self-sufficient. Having followed the deployment of willing through the entire range of phenomena we conclude with Blondel that we will 'more' than what we have willed. But the problem remains: how did I will myself in the first place? There subsists, say Blondel,

"something" that we do not will, that which is prior to my being.²²² This is a prior determinism, one that is more profound than all the determinisms the will had posited. It is a determinism that precedes, envelops and surpasses our personal initiative.²²³ What in ourselves is the principle of our own will? What is it about outside ourselves that reveals to us that this determinism is prior to our willing? If there is a hidden will prior to our own willing, why are we disappointed and frustrated about our own willing?

Blondel maintains that the human will cannot keep itself to itself because its willing does not all come from itself. Abstractly, the will is forced to will and we did not will this principle within us that forces us to will. We bear a life, then, which does not belong to us. But the will given to us cannot find happiness or satisfaction from its own willing. Indeed, as Blondel puts it, sufficiency is the "scandal of reason".²²⁴ Intellectually, we understand suffering but to feel the "hurt of the powerless will" is a different matter because we never really can rationalize away the "humiliating and painful fatality".²²⁵ The cruelty is in the impossibility of remedying our acts because "action is indelible: no indemnification is ever an absolute reparation; no expiation, no penalty piled up on one side of the balance ever raises to the other side; the consequences unfold to infinity".²²⁶ The paradox of willing is always with us because it seems that the "something" forever recedes at

every moment that satisfaction is achieved by phenomena, yet it appears just on the horizon as we stop willing. But action is not yet equal to the willing from which it proceeds. The will has not willed itself entirely. From the bankruptcy of the will Blondel concludes that "we are willed to will, no longer the object, no longer the fact but the act and the very being of the will".¹²¹ Blondel believes that the conflict between the willed-will and the willing-will explains within us a sense of dependence, a privation or an inhibition. What this means is that the conflict displays consciousness itself and reflection.¹²² What this consciousness entails is not a consciousness of phenomena as phenomena, that is, "the consciousness of insufficiency".¹²³

What Blondel has done up until now has been to eliminate all that is willed in order to leave open what has not been willed. The method of residue reveals what it is that wills and what leaves it willing, with no option but to go on willing. Its attachment to life displays the coherence of the will to its own nature. We say with Blondel, "I will, and if nothing of what is willed satisfies me, much more, if I will nothing of what is and of what I am, it is because I will myself, more than all that is and all that I am". If we do not attain what we wish we do not stop, we keep willing because "in what we will as in what we do not will, there is something we will above all else" and "in willed action, then, a real content is found whose amplitude reflexion has

not yet equaled".²²⁰ A negative conclusion that it is impossible to stop and impossible to find satisfaction is countered at this point by Blondel by simply saying: where one says nothingness of the phenomenon, insufficiency of the phenomenon, abortion and meaninglessness of human action, we must translate: necessity and the need for something else, for something in comparison with which the phenomenon seems only nothing".²²¹ Where does the dialectic take us, that if we will nothing else, we, at least, will ourselves? An ethical dilemma is posed by Blondel and has this to say:

... se vouloir soi-même est-ce possible et quel est le sens vrai de cette ambition nécessaire? Partagé entre ce que je fais sans le vouloir et ce que je veux sans le faire, je suis toujours comme exclu de moi-même. Comment donc y rentrer, et mettre dans mon action ce qui s'y trouve déjà sans doute, mais à mon insu et hors de mes prises? Comment égaler le sujet au sujet même pour me vouloir moi-même pleinement, il faut que je veuille plus que je n'ai su trouver encore.

En me heurtant à la suprême nécessité de la volonté, j'ai donc à déterminer ce que je veux, afin que je puisse, en toute plénitude, vouloir vouloir. Oui, il faut que je me veuille moi-même: or il m'est impossible de m'atteindre directement; de moi à moi, il y a un abîme que rien n'a pu combler. Point d'échappatoire pour me dérober, point de passage pour avancer seul: de cette crise, que va-t-il sortir?²²²

The One Thing Necessary

Blondel wonders about what keeps us falling back into nothing and what makes us conscious of the conflict of wills? The answer that he gives is that there is a reality of a "necessary presence" - the entire movement of determinism leads to what he calls "a one thing

necessary" (l'unique nécessaire).²²² This conclusion arises not from a deduction but from a 'reading' of the phenomena of action. According to Blondel it is a matter of grasping "what is already there" and it is an "unknown to be discovered".²²⁴ What seems essential is the manner in which the "unique necessary" is proposed, that is, "necessarily as an end for voluntary action" or a "transcendent end, even while it is already in voluntary action".²²⁵ Blondel adds that "in every state of the soul, at every level of civilization, a one thing necessary presents itself, imposes itself on human consciousness".²²⁶ How can we admit to consciousness this "unique necessary"? Where does certitude lie? Only with experience? The existential ethic does not admit it because that ethic is trapped in the contradictions of willing with no way out, hence, we have the experience of anxiety.²²⁷

Blondel insists that the proof of being, although it is grounded on the totality of 'what appears not to be' is decisive if it is grounded also on the totality of 'what appears to be'.²²⁸ The proof of the 'one thing necessary' obtains its strength from the whole order of phenomena. We can say that the will has now become conscious of itself and of its exigencies. The will sees that nature, science, consciousness, social life, metaphysics, the moral world and so forth had only been "a series of means"; the will never gave them up, yet it has not found satisfaction with them.

According to Blondel the proof for the 'one thing necessary', taken from universal contingency can be formulated in this way:

Cet unique nécessaire se tient à l'entrée ou au terme de toutes les avenues où l'homme peut entrer; au bout de la science et de la curiosité de l'esprit, au bout de la passion sincère et meurtrière, au bout de la souffrance et du dégoût, au bout de la joie et de la reconnaissance, partout, qu'on descende en soi ou qu'on monte aux limites de la speculation métaphysique, le même besoin renaît. Rien de ce qui est connu, possédé, fait, ne se suffit ni ne s'annihile. Impossible de s'y tenir: impossible d'y renoncer.²³⁷

Blondel's argument from contingency examines the necessary, as an ulterior term not from outside the contingency but from within. to put it in another way, rather than have the argument give the term a transcendent but exterior support, it discovers that it is immanent. Thus, rather than proving that it is impossible to affirm the contingent alone, the argument proves the impossibility of denying the necessary that grounds it.²⁴⁰ The totality of nature guarantees what surpasses it - "the relative necessity of the contingent reveals the absolute necessity of the necessary".²⁴¹

Blondel suggests that we have enough being, not to be able to get along without some. To feel that "something" is missing, therefore, suggests that "something" is. Blondel goes on to maintain that if the human sciences, consciousness, art etc..., "these shadows of being" are a solid foundation and requires of us the 'one thing necessary', it is because the 'one thing necessary' is their "invisible support".²⁴² But what is this mysterious factor? Blondel suggests that the

Inquiry begins from ourselves and puts the matter in this way:

Dans notre connaissance, dans notre action, il subsiste une disproportion constante entre l'objet même et la pensée, entre l'oeuvre et la volonté. Sans cesse l'idéal conçu est dépassé par l'opération réelle, et sans cesse la réalité obtenue est dépassée par un idéal toujours renaissant. Tout à tour, la pensée devance la pratique, et la pratique devance la pensée; il faut donc que le réel et l'idéal coïncident, puisque cette identité nous est donnée en fait; mais elle ne nous est donnée que pour nous échapper aussitôt. Quelle étrange condition de vie que cette mutuelle et alternante propulsion de l'idée et de l'action! comme deux mouvements d'une vitesse périodiquement inégale se fuient et se rapprochent tour à tour pour coïncider en un point, il semble que toutes nos démarches oscillent autour d'un point de coïncidence où elles se tiennent jamais, quoiqu'elles y passent sans cesse.²⁴³

According to Blondel it is not from ourselves that we draw the light of our thought or the efficaciousness of our action. There is an energy hidden in the depths of consciousness. This mystery can be conceived only by discovering at the same time a power and a wisdom that surpasses us infinitely.²⁴⁴ Therefore, in Blondel's opinion, the cosmological proof, in essence, reveals, in what moves, organizes and knows itself, a common source of power and wisdom. If everything is grounded in our action and our thought, argues Blondel, then, our thought and our action are grounded in one another thanks to the 'pure act of perfect thought'.²⁴⁵ Here Blondel suggests that the teleological proof is meaningless if taken in isolation. Only in its union with the other proofs does it maintain its full value. The "true" teleological proof, Blondel argues, is that it shows

that the true wisdom of things is not in things and the true wisdom of man is not in man. Its point of departure is not simply what is already realized but what is "incessantly realizing and perfecting itself".²⁴⁶ Blondel puts the proof in this manner:

Ni ma pensée ne peut égaler mon action, ni mon action ne peut égaler ma pensée. Il y a, en moi, disproportion entre la cause efficiente et la cause finale; et pourtant ni l'une ni l'autre ne peuvent être en moi ce qu'elles sont déjà, sans la médiation permanente d'une pensée et d'une action parfaites. Tout ce qu'il y a de beauté et de vie dans les choses, tout ce qu'il y a de lumière et de puissance en l'homme enveloppe, dans son imperfection et son infirmité même, une perfection souveraine: ainsi va se déterminer cette triple relation. - C'est en nous, c'est dans le réel que nous découvrons, comme en un miroir imparfait, cette inaccessible perfection. Et pourtant, - ni nous ne pouvons nous confondre avec elle, - ni nous ne pouvons la confondre avec nous.²⁴⁷

Again,

Ainsi l'ordre, l'harmonie, la sagesse que je découvre en moi et dans les choses n'est pas simplement un effet à partir duquel un raisonnement me forcerait à monter vers une cause absente de son oeuvre; je ne puis considérer cette harmonie et cette beauté comme constituée et subsistante en elle-même; je n'en fais pas les prémisses d'une déduction; je n'invoque aucun principe de causalité; mais je trouve dans cette sagesse imparfaite des choses et de ma pensée la présence et l'action nécessaires d'une pensée et d'une puissance parfaites.²⁴⁸

Blondel's conclusion, therefore, seems simple enough, the 'one thing necessary' has its 'raison d'être' only because we do not equal ourselves. Blondel insists that at the bottom of consciousness there is "an I that is no longer I; I reflect my own image in it. I see myself only in it; its impenetrable mystery is like a foil, that reflects light within me".²⁴⁹ But if in me, there is more than I, yet it

is "not more than I am it", then the "one thing necessary" is not the other side or reverse side of consciousness. Blondel argues on the behalf of the reality of the "one thing necessary" in this way:

Je ne suis nécessairement amené à reconnaître ce qui me manque dans cela même que je fais: l'identité absolue du réel et de l'idéal, de la puissance et de la sagesse, de l'être et de la perfection, voilà ce qu'il est, pour que je sois ce que je suis. Pensée et volonté sans lesquelles il n'y aurait ni pensée ni volonté en moi et qu'en même temps ni ma pensée ni ma volonté ne peuvent comprendre, tels sont les termes solidaires du mystère qui s'impose à ma conscience. Je n'ai de raison de l'affirmer que parce qu'il m'est à la fois nécessaire et inaccessible: il est ce qui ne peut être fait ou pensé par moi, quoique je ne puisse rien faire ou penser que par lui. Et s'il me demeure inaccessible, ce n'est pas faute d'être ou de clarté en lui, mais en moi. Il est donc ce que je ne puis être: toute pensée et toute action.²⁵⁰

From this, Blondel's ontological argument acquires a new meaning and it is "not a matter of indifference" that Blondel reverses the order from Kant.²⁵¹ Otherwise, Blondel runs the risk of seeking the idea of perfection as an imaginative fiction, without real grounding. For Blondel, "it is less a look than a life" and the proof, comes not from speculation but is "tied to the entire movement of our thought and action".²⁵² The proof is not something abstract from which only abstraction could be drawn, nor is it an ideal from which one can pretend to draw the real but "something real in which we find the ideal".²⁵³ Again, the proof consists not in going from the idea to being, but, rather, in finding the idea in being and being in action, by discovering within ourselves real perfection, we then move on

to Ideal perfection. Thus, "to reach 'the one thing necessary' we do not grasp it in itself where we are not; but we start from it within ourselves, where it is".²⁵⁴ Blondel asserts that we are "bound to affirm the one thing necessary" to the extent that we have an idea of it because "this" idea itself is a reality".²⁵⁵ Blondel argues that perfection is a mystery because we conceive that it necessarily knows us and knows itself absolutely. While we feel an irremediable disproportion, we sense an immediate identity. But what troubles us is that we cannot equal ourselves; what also troubles us is the "absolute equation of being, knowing, and acting".²⁵⁶ At this point, Blondel warns us that the notion of first cause, or moral idea or the idea of metaphysical perfection, or again, a pure act (all abstractions from reason) are false, indeed idolatrous, if they are considered in isolation as abstractions. But, once they are in solidarity in one another, there is no longer "a game of understanding, but a practical certitude".²⁵⁷ By presenting the proofs together the "labour of thought" becomes immediate and practical.²⁵⁸ What Blondel is stressing is that the proofs must come from the concrete and the real teachings of action. Therefore it is in practice that the certitude of the "one thing necessary" has its foundation. It is from action alone that there "arises the indisputable presence and binding proof of Being".²⁵⁹ It is by the immediate necessity that "the one" is manifested and

it is "he" who is the plenitude and it is the total and concrete development of action that reveals "him" in a way that makes "him" a concrete truth.²⁶⁰ Blondel maintains that it is at the end of what is finite do we encounter what phenomenon and nothingness both hide and manifest, namely "God".²⁶¹ Blondel concludes that the "thought of God" is brought by a "determinism that forces it upon us".²⁶² Here Blondel anticipates the further conclusion that the voluntary takes on a "transcendent character".²⁶³

Blondel, once again, returns to the basic human problem:

La pensée de Dieu en nous dépend doublement de notre action. D'une part, c'est parce qu'en agissant nous trouvons une infinie disproportion en nous-mêmes, que nous sommes contraints à chercher l'équation de notre propre action à l'infini. D'autre part, c'est parce qu'en affirmant l'absolue perfection nous ne réussissons jamais à égaler notre propre affirmation, que nous sommes contraints à en chercher le complément et le commentaire dans l'action. Le problème que pose l'action, l'action seule peut le résoudre.²⁶⁴

Blondel says that God escapes us if we do not look for him in action. We cannot look for God from the outside, the speculative method - in this manner, God, becomes a phantom, an idol. In theological language, Blondel states that,

Penser à Dieu est une action; mais aussi nous n'agissons pas sans coopérer avec lui et sans le faire collaborer avec nous, par une sorte de théergie nécessaire qui réintègre dans l'opération humaine la part divine, afin de mettre l'action volontaire en équation dans la conscience. Et c'est parce que l'action est une synthèse de l'homme avec Dieu, qu'elle est en perpétuel devenir, comme travaillée par l'aspiration d'une infinie croissance.²⁶⁵

Blondel's thesis, affirming "the natural aspiration", "the

quest for the meaning of life", ultimately, concludes that "man always places in his acts ... this character of transcendence".²²² This "necessary thought of God", the last step in the determinism, "resolves the conflict into an inavoidable alternative".²²³ It is Blondel's contention that, if one is forced to conceive and assign a higher term to one's own thought and action, there is also the necessity to feel the need to equal one's thought and life to it. Therefore, "the thought of God" is the "inevitable complement of human action".²²⁴ By the same token, human action has the desire to reach and realize in itself this idea of perfection. Blondel writes:

L'homme éprouve un invincible besoin de capter Dieu. C'est parce qu'il ne le peut pas qu'il croit en lui et l'affirme; il ne croit en lui et ne l'affirme vraiment qu'en usant de lui et qu'en le pratiquant en effet. Dieu n'a de raison d'être pour nous que parce qu'il est ce que nous ne pouvons être nous-mêmes ni faire par nos seules forces; et cependant nous paraissions n'avoir d'être, de volonté et d'action qu'en vue de le vouloir et de le devenir. Il semble qu'il se mette entre nous et nous, qu'il nous divise jusqu'en la jointure des os, et que nous ayons, si l'on ose dire, à lui passer sur le corps; et pourtant nous n'avons point d'action sur lui: notre volonté meurt ou il naît en nous; notre œuvre cesse ou commence la sienne, et pour mieux dire, la sienne semble absorber tout ce qu'il y a de réel dans la nôtre. Ce qui nous appartient donc, c'est d'être sans être; et toutefois nous sommes forcés à vouloir devenir ce que nous ne pouvons atteindre ni posséder par nous-mêmes. Quelle étrange exigence! c'est parce que j'ai l'ambition d'être infiniment que je sens mon impuissance, je ne me suis pas fait, je ne peux ce que je veux, je suis contraint de me dépasser; et, en même temps, je ne puis reconnaître cette foncière infirmité qu'en devinant déjà le moyen d'y échapper, par l'aveu d'un autre être en moi, par la substitution d'une autre volonté à la mienne.²²⁵

The substitution of another will for my own in order

to be what I am already sums up the entire order of practice. Blondel asks - yes or no, does man will to live "even to the point of dying ... by consenting to be supplanted by God", or will man pretend "to be self-sufficient without God"?²⁷⁰

The conflict confronting man is expressed as "to love oneself to the contempt of God, to love God to the contempt of self".²⁷⁰ In Blondel's view, the very thought that one ought to do something with one's life clearly displays a call to "resolve the great business of life, the one thing necessary".²⁷¹

It is without question that in Blondel's estimate, the decisive question of life needs to be resolved. This question comes up when the series of means has been organized in consciousness, namely, after having reflected on the series of determinations and having come up to the confrontation of the conflict. As Blondel states it, "the knowledge of the least phenomenon has the role of making us rise, through the chain of determinism, to this free decision on which the destiny of each individual depends".²⁷²

According to Blondel, "the option is imposed on us; but it is through it that we become what we will".²⁷³ Blondel is here suggesting that we sooner or later come up against the option. We are led necessarily to the option. The determination of life has thrust us to the option. In fact, it is imposed by the exigency of action through the inadequation of the will. In interpreting Blondel's thought,

we can argue that, without the option binding us, there can be no ethical life because without conflict there can be no solution. The option imposes on us the need to resolve one's destiny. For Blondel, it is the supreme ethical question:

Ainsi, en dernière analyse, ce n'est pas la liberté qui s'absorbe dans le déterminisme; c'est le déterminisme total de la vie humaine qui est suspendu à cette suprême alternative: ou exclure de nous toute autre volonté que la nôtre, ou se livrer à l'être que nous ne sommes pas comme à l'unique salutaire. L'homme aspire à faire le dieu: être dieu sans Dieu et contre Dieu, être dieu par Dieu et avec Dieu, c'est le dilemme.²⁷⁴

The Ethical Option

Blondel insists that the option is the "necessary form under which a will ... takes possession of itself, in order to will what it is by being what it wills".²⁷⁵

Clearly, it is the way that the will appropriates itself.

Blondel provides us with the ethical dimension of human existence when he says that the simple way in which "popular consciousness conceives the problem of destiny as a choice, personal to each individual, between good and evil, between the order of God and the inclination of egoism, corresponds to the most profound drama of the interior life". Blondel insists that "through its inevitable expansion, the human will ... has divine exigencies". The will, forever, reaches out for God, who remains always out of reach. Blondel emphasizes the tension between the need for and the inaccessibility of the "one thing necessary". But if the "one thing necessary" is always present, in our willed action and yet is inaccessible, what can man opt for? No matter what we do, our destiny unravels a "divine thread": but what does our elan and the inability of science to unravel the mystery mean to us? Blondel says that it is in and by human action that the human drama, human destiny is resolved. It is impossible that it not be resolved because beneath every choice, every option, there is always willing and for Blondel the option leads to perdition or to salvation, and in all cases it has to be willed. Therefore, from Blondel's position, there are two options: the death of action or the life of action.

We seem to have gone full circle, back to where we had asked whether man has a destiny and two solutions were presented - the negative solution of the nihilist and the

positive solution that posited that there is "something". The difference, however, is that, now, the alternative is whether to opt for phenomena and exclude the supernatural or opt for the supernatural and exclude the order of phenomena. At the beginning of action the choice was for or against "something". The choice was whether to affirm or deny that "something". It was clearly a rational choice. Now, the choice is not to be made with one's mind but with one's whole being. The choice is ontic. At the beginning of action we had to will in order to choose life but now we have to literally will another life. The first option was a commitment to self-sufficiency. From this commitment man willed the whole order of phenomena; now he is left unsatisfied; he wants more and cannot obtain it. Now, the option differs. It is for or against what lies beyond the order of phenomena.

This first option is still a commitment to self-sufficiency. What is at stake here is not the expansion of the will but making absolute what man is. It is a question of deifying that ego, or as Blondel shifts to Spinoza's term, man finds in himself "the infinite of the Substance" that makes him be. This is the negative way of filling up the gap between the will-willing and the will-willed. It reduces the infinite to the finite within the subject. As Somerville says, the very perversity of the will is to make God a finite end while the aspiration of the will "retains its infinity".

Blondel, of course, disagrees with the Kantian notion that a moral act is not moral unless it is performed solely in terms of a motive of duty because for Blondel, duty has the character of the infinite. Therefore to scorn duty in favor of a self-indulgent pleasure results in an infinite loss. What this means is that it is wrong to think that an evil action is a lesser good, that it is only slightly capable of narrowing the gap between the two conflicting wills. - Again, Blondel insists that the death of action is expressed by the Promethean pride of self-sufficiency - one who "attributes an absolute value to himself". - In a word, the will has not been converted. As Blondel puts it:

Dans la libre option s'insinuent l'absolu et l'infini d'une volonté qui donne un être aux phénomènes, et qui en font une réalité subsistante et indestructible. C'est pour avoir prétendu se contenter de la durée et se borner à la nature, que l'homme meurt; non qu'il ne puisse remplir et dépasser l'espace ou le temps: mais il a tant agrandi ce domaine des sens et de la science qu'il pourrait presque feindre de s'y mouvoir à l'aise et d'y trouver une demeure définitive s'il ne lui fallait, bon gré mal gré, toujours en sortir par l'inévitable avertissement de la conscience, par le scandale de la souffrance, par la mort. -

Up until now, man has been able to remedy the effects of his acts but now the issue is to remedy "the principle of his willed actions" and to change his being into something else. - What is the remedy for man's destiny? Here Blondel hints at the need for supernatural grace when he says,

Qu'on le comprenne donc une fois pour toutes: dans l'action volontaire, il s'opère un secret hymen de la volonté humaine et de la volonté divine. Etre appelé à la vie de la raison et de la liberté, c'est participer à la libre nécessité de Dieu qui ne peut manquer de se

vouloir. Nous aussi, nous ne pouvons manquer de nous vouloir: ce que nous recevons d'être en toute propriété est tel qu'il est impossible de ne pas l'agréer. Ce don, on ne peut en abuser, on ne peut feindre de le refuser qu'en l'acceptant déjà, et qu'en usant pour ainsi dire de Dieu contre Dieu. Aussi repousser son concours, livrer nos coeurs et nos oeuvres à l'embrassement des faux biens, c'est un adultère. Cette union qui nous constitue, ce lien que nous voulons de nous à lui comme il l'a voulu de lui à nous, nous pouvons le violer sans vouloir le briser jamais. Grandeur redoutable de l'homme! il veut que Dieu ne soit pas pour lui: et Dieu n'est plus pour lui. Mais, gardant toujours en son fond la volonté créatrice, il y adhère si fermement qu'elle devient toute sienne. Son être reste sans l'Être. Et quand Dieu ratifie cette volonté solitaire, c'est le dam.

The choice of the death of action constitutes the killing of God in man and to kill him with a "divine force".

Blondel stresses that "action is a synthesis of man and God: neither God alone, nor man alone can change it, produce it or annihilate it". To choose the death of action is man's pretention of acting and living by his own strength alone, the pretention of self-sufficiency. Such an option, insists Blondel, is a lie to one's aspirations. The penalty is to be without Being.

Blondel maintains that action cannot stay enclosed in the natural order. But how is man to live a life of plenitude? What is the practical and efficacious way of doing what we cannot do alone, namely, to will freely what we necessarily will to complete the inadequation of the two wills? Moreover, how can action be complete and human destiny be fulfilled? How can action and human destiny be perfected?

In Blondel's view, the correct option is that option

whereby man submits his will to God. Wisdom begins when we realize that we are powerless to will all that we wish to will. At this point, Blondel reminds us of the practical rule for moral action in all its sincerity - give yourself to what is good.²¹⁹ Painful duty is that duty done in a spirit of submission and detachment simply, because, we sense, in that duty, an order of a will to which ours has subordinated itself. Blondel is quick to point out that it is easier to obey the rules we make for ourselves than bend our will to another. To only listen to our selves would remove from the moral life "all the necessary foundation of humility and the abnegation which it needs".²²⁰ Indeed, action is good when the will submits to an obligation that requires an effort. What Blondel is saying is the paradoxical dictum that the one who is not self-willed always does his will. In Blondel's words:

... l'action bonne est celle qui, dans l'homme même, dépasse et immole l'homme: chaque fois qu'on accomplit un devoir, il faut sentir qu'il emporte la vie, qu'il remplace la volonté propre, et qu'il suscite en nous un être nouveau. Car il faudrait mourir plutôt que de ne le point accomplir; et, en vivant pour nous en acquitter, c'est déjà un autre qui vit en nous. Tout acte est comme un testament. Il faudra bien prendre le temps de mourir: c'est comme mourant qu'il faut vivre, avec cette simplicité qui va droit à l'essentiel et au vrai.²²¹

Therefore, "there is nothing absolutely good and willed, except what we do not will of ourselves, what God wills in us and of us".²²⁰ Blondel is convinced that the good life is ethically a relationship to a Thou:

Si, pour bien agir, il faut souffrir d'être supplanté

par une volonté, conforme il est vrai, mais supérieure à la nôtre, n'est-ce pas que, dans la souffrance même, dans tout ce qui répugne à notre nature, il est besoin d'une plus courageuse action, pour faire rentrer la douleur et la mort, elles également, dans le plan volontaire de la vie? mais n'est-ce pas aussi que cette mortification est la véritable épreuve, la preuve et l'aliment de l'amour généreux? On n'aime point le bien, si l'on n'aime pour lui ce qu'il y a de moins aimable. Ou il y a moins de nous, il y a plus de lui.²¹

If renunciation lies at the origin of good action, then, by the same token, suffering and sacrifice, are what is encountered in the unfolding of the moral life. Suffering accompanies growth; we die in order to live. To be sure, man's heart is measured by his acceptance for suffering because in him lies "the imprint of One other than himself".²² Blondel seems fond of saying that "suffering is in us as a seed" - because of suffering something enters into us, without us, in spite of us.²³ Pain, therefore, reveals to us what escapes egoistical knowledge and egoistical will but suffering, is not merely a trial, a test for Job, but is a proof of love and it renews the interior life. Pain and suffering are scandals to reason because, as Blondel says, suffering is "unexplained, unknown, infinite".²⁴ Pain educates man and resurrects him to a new life. Suffering is salutary because, in Blondel's words, "that by which we deprive ourselves is worth infinitely more than that of which we deprive ourselves".²⁵ Blondel believes that a will's sincerity is measured by the how much it is unhappy with what is finite. The fullness of spontaneous aspiration is measured by the amount of

self-annihilation for as Blondel says, "mortification ... is the true metaphysical experiment".²²⁰ Blondel warns us that to think that renunciation of the will is man's original work is illusory to think this is to lose sight of the living God that treats him like an object. Blondel corrects this by saying that action is entirely from man but it first must be "willed as entirely from God".²²¹ Since Blondel maintains that since there is a perfect synthesis, it is ambiguous to say that the initial act comes from the one and the second from the other - each acts for the whole. The "communion of two wills" is grounded on the fact that one cannot do anything without the other and action proceeds entirely from each.²²²

Prior to the recognition of the problem of human destiny, it was sufficient for man to act according to his reason and his instincts without ever reflecting and searching within him for the principle or the means and ends of his action. Truly, we act naively, but once the problem of destiny reaches our consciousness, a moral burden weighs us down. At this level of awareness it is time that man casts his acts beyond phenomena, outside the finite, outside of the circle of his willing. It is important to understand here that, at this level of awareness, action and willing becomes reflexive. Action turns back upon itself and seeks the principle behind all the action only in order to gather for himself all that he needs to make the proper ethical choice.

For Blondel, the principle behind all our willing is a "divine principle".²⁹⁹ In Blondel's words, therefore, we can say that "it is not for us to give Him to ourselves, not to give ourselves to ourselves; our role is to act so that God may be entirely in us as He is there perforce, and to find at the very principle of our consent to His sovereign action His efficacious presence".³⁰⁰ Blondel, here,

concludes that "the true will of man is the divine willing".³⁰¹ Blondel insists on this point because it is impossible for man "to reach his necessary end by his own strength alone ... and it is not man who can sustain this life: something divine has to dwell in him".³⁰² Finally, for the first time, Blondel mentions the supernatural and defines it within the framework of his thesis:

Absolument impossible et absolument nécessaire à l'homme, c'est là proprement la notion du surnaturel: l'action de l'homme passe l'homme; et tout l'effort de sa raison, c'est de voir qu'il ne peut, qu'il ne doit pas s'y tenir. Attente cordiale du messie inconnu; baptême de désir, que la science humaine est impuissante à provoquer, parce que ce besoin même est un don. Elle en peut montrer la nécessité, elle ne peut le faire naître. S'il faut en effet fonder une société réelle et coopérer avec Dieu, comment présumerait-on d'y réussir, sans reconnaître que Dieu reste souverain maître de son don et de son opération? avec nécessaire, mais qui cesse d'être efficace, si l'on n'appelle point le médiateur ignoré, ou si l'on se ferme au sauveur révélé.³⁰³

A question arises, in my mind, at this point: does the 'unique necessary' correspond to the goal of philosophical inquiry? Is it the end product of all inquiry? The suggestion, of course, in Blondel's view, is that the 'unique necessary' grounds the philosophical inquiry itself:

it is the source of its own self-discovery. There is no Hegelian hubris in Blondel.

As a summary we may recall how the will uses its dual tendency to achieve what it can and what it cannot. That opposition of the will stimulates the mediating effect of action because it is that very action that cements and solidifies the multiplicity of all tendencies into, not simply a unified whole but into a synergistic whole/part connection. This foundation which is readily seen in the unfolding and development of the organism also grounds the whole of human existence. The dynamic operation of a mediating action that structures the dual tendency of the will is seen to occur in the deployment of the will into the spheres of intersubjectivity, after the eruption of consciousness. In short, existence is grounded on a dual tendency of the will mediated by action. But we saw that the entire order of phenomena did not suffice the aspiration of man. He desires more and it was shown how man even wills the infinite into the finite. Still, man is left with a feeling of unfulfillment: the will has reached the end of the line, yet it is not satiated. From this we concluded, with Blondel, the hypothesis of a redemptive agency that is necessary yet impracticable. The submission to God's grace was the proper option to take in order for action to be completed and man's destiny to be fulfilled. Such was the avenue that Blondel's phenomenology took in order to discern what lies before and

after man's willing as well as what lies above and below human action.

Once the ground of human destiny has been phenomenologically explored in its entirety we need to ground the very intentionality of the phenomenology. It is here in the next chapter that we will do this by opening up the avenue of reflexivity in order to ground the meaning of human destiny.

CHAPTER V

POETICS OF THE WILL

The Influence of Maine de Biran

Critique of Ideology and Empiricism

Maine de Biran (1766-1824) bequeathed in the religious sphere "the type of apologetics 'from within' which was represented ... by Ollé-Laprune and afterwards by Blondel".¹ In addition, de Biran serves as the model for that "spiritualist" philosophy represented by Ravaisson, Lachelier, Boutroux and which extends into the religious philosophy of Jean Nabert.² What we argue in this thesis is that Maine de Biran is a connecting link between Blondel and Jean Nabert because he serves as the model indirectly in Blondel and directly in Nabert.

The starting point for Maine de Biran was Condillac who had clearly defined the role of philosophy as the attempt to discover the primordial experience which is irrevocable and which would be suffice to explain all other experiences.³ From the beginning of his inquiry, de Biran's concern was not abstract speculation but the question of what were the first tendencies of thought insofar as it upheld a bearing on practice and action. What he concerns himself

with its existence insofar as it grounds moral life.⁴

The concern of de Biran was what one is to do with one's life in order to live well. To answer this de Biran had to discover how consciousness is formed and what is the principle around which the interior life organizes itself. It was important for de Biran to look at it in this way because, for him, the moral problem coincides with the quest for happiness and therefore he saw a connection between moral consciousness and psychological consciousness.⁵

Accordingly, de Biran saw that man is torn between two opposing powers, having unequal value: the strength of one's impressions, on the one hand, and the energy of one's will, on the other hand. It was de Biran's opinion that, an interior analysis and observation of the self from a psychological viewpoint would be the method that would lead to the solution. But the method begins with the problem of the moral order, that is, with the conception of man, which, in de Biran's mind, was the seed of his entire philosophical endeavor.

The starting point of de Biran is clear: man is a double, homo duplex.⁶ This double aspect of man in de Biran's scheme refers to man's passive and active psychological makeup. In a dynamic way, it refers to the battle between the movement of the animal life and the exigency of the spirit.⁷ It was Rousseau, in his Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard, who posed the problem

of man in this way for Maine de Biran.⁹ The diversity of human sentiments is seen as being grounded in the weakness of human reason and the insufficiency of the human spirit.

Metaphysics has failed man was the conclusion. Impenetrable mysteries surround us everywhere, existing above

senseimpressions. In order to have insights, man believes that he is intelligent but what we have, in Rousseau's view,

is imagination. Therefore, there is an escape route from human doubt and a way of circumventing a weak and always

impotent reason - this is by attending to "la lumiere

interieure". This interior light does not destroy reason

but merely complements it. It is an intuitive method used to

affirm truths that are inaccessible to the intellect but

which responds to the demands of the heart.¹⁰ It was this

dislike for metaphysics that influenced de Biran. Since

existence is prior to reflection, "le sens intime" would be

the spectacles of the new philosophical method.¹¹

The second influence on de Biran was the philosophy of sensation, another rejection of reason. Here, de Biran

gathered the belief that philosophy should be grounded on

experience, the empirical method.¹² De Biran was highly

critical of the conclusions reached by Bonnet. It was in

L'Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme that Bonnet

negated all freedom and, consequently, all morality. Bonnet

had stated that freedom is the act by which the will creates

itself and this is because the power of the soul is executed

by a will already determined. Liberty is a disguise of necessities because man is a slave to impulses; the feeling of freedom is an illusion. Bonnet denies real freedom and psychological activity because man is determined by outside activity. Ultimately, man is reduced to mechanical movements.¹²

Maine de Biran felt that it was sufficient to feel, interiorly, the existence of an undeniable freedom. Such a certainty manifests itself in the form of attention, that very power that man possesses in order to fix his spirit on objects. Again, it was le sens intime that witnessed the autonomous activity of interiority.¹³

It was also against Condillac that de Biran tried to establish the existence of an activity proper to an individual. Because Condillac reduced understanding to sensation, he did not view intelligence except in terms of pure passivity. This concluded with a denial of the existence of an internal active principle.¹⁴ This, of course, was unacceptable to de Biran.

To summarize quickly, we can say that the starting point of de Biran's thinking was that man had a double nature, on the one hand, passive, subjected to sense impressions and crushed by their multitude, while on the other hand, man possesses a free force, capable of self-determination and able to activate itself independent of all exterior forces. This entailed the moral conflict, the

war of conflicting tendencies.¹⁴ This was the starting point that inspired the Memoire sur l'influence de l'habitude (1802).¹⁵

After the encounter with Bonnet, de Biran turned his attention to his contemporaries, the ideologists Destutt de Tracy and Cabanis.¹⁶ It was de Tracy who helped de Biran turn away from the empiricism of Locke and Condillac. What de Tracy did was turn away from the reductive analysis of Condillac to immediate self-observation, to reflect on what we believe to be taking place when we think, speak and act voluntarily.¹⁷ In addition, de Tracy saw that if Condillac's psychology was true, the emphasis on receptivity, then we can never know that there was an external world - this was the problem of Hume. It was de Tracy's wish to show that the ground of our knowledge of the external world is activity, our motion, our voluntary action, insofar as it meets with resistance.¹⁸ De Tracy saw that the judgement with respect to our knowledge of external reality could not be accounted for without the experience of resistance, presupposing motility or movement. De Tracy insisted on the role of voluntary movement and recognized the existence of motor activity in man. De Tracy also distinguished between the faculty of the reception of impressions and the faculty of accomplishing movements. Motility became important, because, in order to know the external world, one had to encounter a resistance, suggesting an obstacle and, by

implication, also a body. Thus, for the first time, motor activity seemed to play a role in sense perception. From this point Copleston says that

Though however the ideologists regarded Maine de Biran as one of themselves, he soon came to the conclusion that Destutt de Tracy had failed to exploit his own addition to the psychology of Condillac, namely the idea of the active power in man. He may at first have regarded himself as correcting the ideas of the ideologists where they tended to fall back into the Condillacian psychology, but he was gradually moving away from the reductionist tradition to which the ideologists really belonged in spite of the improvements which they introduced.²¹

In 1802, de Biran's thinking contained nothing original: his dualistic theory of man still could rest on Cabanis' notion of internal sensibility and de Tracy's voluntary motility. De Biran believed, with the sensationalistic schools, that consciousness rests on the givens of sensation yet he could not accept the consequences of such a position.-- According to de Biran, de Tracy had not followed far enough his own insights. In short, de Tracy had simply added on the sense of motility to the passive senses. But Maine de Biran saw things radically different.

Maine de Biran believed that voluntary activity reveals a totally new aspect of human nature.²² Far from being a source, or a grounding of knowledge juxtaposed to others, Maine de Biran understands voluntary action to be animator of all the operations of the human spirit. This was the originality that de Biran brought to the issue. De Biran

brought together the opposition between the passivity of sense-impressions and voluntary activity into full view.

Cabanis and de Tracy had not perceived the consequences of such antithetical faculties, active and passive, both irreducible to each other.²⁴

De Biran maintained that if passivity dominates, there is sensation; if activity dominates, there is a perception, but in all cases, the impression results from the thrust of acting against passivity. What is important to note is that activity and passivity do not manifest themselves in a pure state. What Maine de Biran had uncovered was the fundamental distinction of two lives, on the one hand, la vie organique, the passive life to which is linked the operation of instincts, affective sensations, passions etc... while on the other hand, la vie intellectuelle, the active life upon which depends perception, judgement, will and all movements.²⁵ What de Biran wished to do at this point was to look for the primitive fact of life (le fait primitif) with which appears in their concreteness, the two opposing forces of human existence.

Primitive Fact and the Psychology of Effort

There are questions that seek answers from where de Biran stands: are there immediate internal apperceptions? Is the internal apperception different than intuition? What is

the foundation of consciousness? What all this amounts to is the simple question: what is le fait primitif of all human existence?

Methodologically employing "la psychologie idéologique", Maine de Biran became concerned with nature and substance of the soul as a means of discerning the operations of the spirit. No image or sign can represent the effort but an interior bending takes place which allows to seize at its own source, that élan which implies a personal activity.²⁰ According to de Biran, an empirical method, as ordinarily understood is inadequate and incapable to conceive that which is most secret and hidden in being and thought: "le jaillissement d'une spontanée vivante et créatrice".²¹ De Biran insists that psychology, under the pretext of deriving its model from science, neglects that which is most profound in man: voluntary activity. What is also important is the interior bending ("le doublement intérieur") by which one grasps awareness of one self.²² This act is implied in all operations of the spirit. Condillac and his disciples had ignored it completely. They wanted to ban from psychology the spirit of metaphysics. They only wanted facts, namely the observables as the method demands it in the physical sciences. Empirically they wanted facts that are observable. But Maine de Biran insisted that facts cannot exist independently of the subject. Without the sensation of individual existence, that is, without the self-assured

identity, there cannot be any consciousness of anything. A fact is nothing if it is not known. For the least sensation to be felt and experienced by someone, it is necessary that this someone be conscious and aware of its own being.

Destutt de Tracy missed this urgent point: simple sensation is not the basic foundation that explains motor activity. De Tracy had presupposed the sensation of personal existence to be identical with sensitive affection. Sensation is not a primitive fact but rather implies a personal element. De Tracy should have searched for the origin of that self-consciousness.²⁹

In order for sense-impression to become a definite sensation, it needs to be modified by an active interior act. The objective psychology of the ideologists, insists de Biran, did not uncover in man that which we perceive at the initial perception, namely, self-consciousness.³⁰

Psychologically, the method of Locke and Newton were inadequate. De Biran believed that their method could not seize the phenomena of voluntary activity in its interiority and capture it in its true nature. Tied with a psychological state, there also exists a feeling of consciousness, which only an effort of introspection can make known and define. Therefore all analyses inspired by the principles of Locke and Newton are poor and sterile because, by excluding a priori the consciousness of phenomena which escapes external observation, they mutilate arbitrarily the real. Again,

according to de Biran, phenomena of psychological life cannot really be known except by an effort of internal apperception. But a return to the attitude of the 17th century metaphysicians, notably, Leibniz and Descartes, is out of the question.

According to de Biran, Descartes had placed himself within the viewpoint of the internal apperception such that he wanted to grasp thought directly as it appears to individual consciousness. What Descartes showed, maintains de Biran, was that the feeling of consciousness is inseparable from thought itself. In this way, Descartes is the father of a science which grounds itself on internal observation teaching the human spirit to turn back upon itself and to discover within himself the true principles of science.

Leibniz wished to seize the fact of consciousness in its depths, that is, ideas so filled with tendency and effort. Basically, both Descartes and Leibniz brought to light the specifics of all the manifestations of psychological life and therefore, in the process, opened up new horizons. They felt the necessity of capturing within, and not without, the fact of consciousness. But de Biran maintains that their error consisted in seeking in consciousness the essence of the soul, thus abandoning the sphere of facts in order to engage themselves in metaphysics and abstractions. They shifted their concern from what is concrete to what is pure speculation. It is understood, then,

that de Biran always felt uneasy about a priori philosophies, insisting that to bypass what experience teaches is arbitrary and vain. Again, de Biran sees experience as the best measure against the illusion of a priori speculation.

The Foundation of Subjectivity and the Limits of Reason

Two aspects are to be noted in de Biran's criticism of a priori philosophies that are hidden from view but which characterizes human nature. First, we note the existence of a voluntary activity which is essentially spontaneous such that there is no exterior sign which does not manifest the élan. Secondly, there is the appearance of the awareness of consciousness due to the refractory operation of internal awareness.³³ Is there not a specific or unique fact that accounts for these two aspects?

It was the merit of Maine de Biran to discover that the psychological experience of effort is the best method of studying voluntary activity, because, in de Biran's mind, this very effort implies, not only a development of an action but also an awareness of consciousness. The cause that is doing the action perceives itself interiorly in a kind of return to itself. This self-awareness can only come about by an encounter with an opposition.³⁴ As Maine de Biran points out, "le sentiment de la force moi, qui produit le mouvement, et l'effet senti de contraction musculaire, sont

blen deux éléments constitutifs de la perception d'effort volontaire".³⁵ Thus, action and consciousness determines each other reciprocally. In this way, a certain power verifies itself by that very power-in-action.

What is this "sentiment de l'effort"? It was de Biran's main concern to make clear what this entailed. It is important to note that effort is present as a free activity at the same time that it is accompanied by an awareness of consciousness. De Biran insists that voluntary effort supposes a deployment of cerebral activity, the top of the hierarchy. However, he maintains that there is no identity between the determinations that are willed and the determinations that are instinctive, that is between the willing and the desiring. Therefore, voluntary movements, freely accomplished, are accompanied by consciousness while those movements which are determined by desire implies only an affective sentiment.³⁶ Therefore effort is a sub gen er is function.

Every time that de Biran talks of effort he qualifies its force as "hyperorganic".³⁷ This is because he sees this force as being of another order than the phenomena which physiologists examine. This force is superior and is a dominating force, disengaged from the body. By this he designates something which is more than an organic reaction but which is not a spiritual energy. This idea of 'power' is ineffable. Effort is essentially an act, a totality that

escapes analysis. De Biran maintains that we can distinguish an hyperorganic force naturally in relation with a living power of resistance. Effort, therefore, appears dualistic.

Between the interior force which provokes it and the organic resistance which accompanies it there exists a narrow connection. Accordingly, this connection is so strong that all terms describing the phenomenon seems to disappear behind it. It is as if the two aspects in opposition did not have a reality proper to each other. It is difficult to conceive a force and a resistance between which there is a mysterious connection. The organic resistance and the interior force are nothing but relative aspects; what is real is their connection. You cannot isolate one from the other without resulting in a change of nature, or to put it in another manner, without passing from the concrete to the abstract, from the relative to the absolute. Therefore what we have here are not two facts but one mode or operation. As such, le fait primitif consists of a relation, irreducible in terms of phenomenology, whereby the cause and the effect, the subject and the doing finds itself indivisibly united in the same feeling or the same perception of effort. therefore, effort is an indivisible totality.

In being, volition and motion are in unison whereas, perceived in time, are two distinct modes whereby one follows upon the other in consciousness. Both elements are simultaneous in reality although they are not perceived as

such.³⁸ What is important is that effort cannot be localized anywhere in the body. Human nature is constituted by effort not by a juxtaposition of a soul to a body.³⁹ In de Biran's view, willing implies no knowledge of the mechanism in play. To act, man does not need to think how to do it, he simply acts spontaneously, is simply unthinking willing. Willing is present in all organic functioning and the feeling of action is the sole knowledge. The 'I' and the body are one and the same. There can be no subordination or correspondence between mind and body. Le Roy summarizes de Biran's perspective this way:

L'effort n'est pas un phénomène physique: il est une réalité hyperorganique, qui ne se confond, ni avec les déterminations du corps, ni avec la pensée pure; en lui-même il est un acte, où l'analyse logique distingue deux termes, mais où l'aperception immédiate ne voit qu'un tout indivisible; il est enfin le principe même de l'individualité, sa puissance dominant l'opposition de l'âme et du corps: en lui quelque chose se dévoile, infiniment simple et pourtant inexprimable.⁴⁰

By 1812, de Biran had elaborated his philosophy of effort. From then on, his concern became more focused around one problem: the question of the 'absolute'.⁴¹ De Biran recognized that at the heart of being there is the presence of effort which seeks itself, finds itself and affirms itself through different forms of the psychological life. The human personality, he believed, should be explained by way of this movement of effort. But do realities, or does anything absolute with a universal character, exist above and beyond effort. Maine de Biran was aware that in the 17th-century

there were strong attempts made to reach the absolute, notably by Malebranche and Spinoza. But it was Descartes and Leibniz who took the world of experience as their starting point.

De Biran points out that metaphysically, the first assertion by Descartes was that of thought. Everything is put into doubt and this very exaggerated doubt leads to a first certitude. Doubting itself is an affirmation, hence, the thought that affirms itself in doubting implies the existence of something which thinks. This something which thinks is the Cogito, an attribute of the thinking substance and this substance of the thinking is the sum, the existing mind. What the Cartesian method did was allow a liberated spirit to reach the absolute under three forms: as mind, as God, as matter.⁴² But Cartesianism leads one to pantheism as de Biran suggests, therefore he is wary of Descartes because of its ontological consequences.

Maine de Biran stops short of an analysis of the Cogito to object against Descartes. Descartes took his point of departure from the consciousness of the ego, or to be more precise, in the immediate apperception of individual existence which translates as "I think". But from there Descartes believed that he could pass to the affirmation of a durable substance existing-in-self, what de Biran calls "pensée substantielle", "chose pensante" and "moi absolu", all of which are translated as "I am".⁴³ According to de

Biran the 'I think' expresses the fact of all consciousness, relative knowledge of the 'I' which exists for itself as much as it apperceives or thinks. However, the 'I am' expresses "l'être absolu ou la croyance que ce sujet qui se dit moi est une substance durable, une chose en soi qui n'a pas besoin de se connaître dans quelque relation à un temps ou un lieu déterminé, pour être dans l'absolu du temps ou de l'espace".⁴⁴ In de Biran's view, this operation by which Descartes removes the givens of consciousness to the notion of an absolute is illegitimate. Reflection on self reveals the absolute existence. This conclusion of Descartes bothered de Biran. According to de Biran, reason uncovers neither something thought, nor encounters an absolute being, having the characteristics of an independent object.⁴⁵ It is illusory, in de Biran's view, to think that we can climb to the notion of an absolute moi or a substantial mind. In de Biran's estimate, this confuses the psychological fact of what is in us (or what we are in the exercising of our thoughts) with the metaphysical notion of being which is reputed to remain outside of thought. De Biran insists that in the 'I think' we cannot immediately capture the reality of 'I am'. This, of course, is what Kant had pointed out while criticizing Descartes.⁴⁶ Maine de Biran came to conclusions, it seems, that were in concordance with Kant. Like Kant, he sees Descartes' fallure, pointing out that it is impossible to know the substantial reality of the mind

from the sole 'givens' of interior observations. In other words, the absolute is not attainable by thought. In addition, Maine de Biran points out that Cartesian metaphysics collapses because we cannot accord to ideas a reality they are not. The only procedure acceptable consists in starting from a first relation of a primitive known. What is immediately given is self-awareness as it appears in the experience of effort. Prior to any notion, prior to any signs which would express it, the I exists and takes itself, in internal experience, to be the immediate cause of all active modes accompanied by an effort deployed upon the body.⁴³ It seems, apparent that, de Biran is highly critical of Descartes, Leibniz, Malebranche and Spinoza for whom the method consists in starting from an absolute given to arrive at a known relative - this is what de Biran characterized as "metaphysique a priori".⁴⁴

Maine de Biran opposes the facts which remain accessible to human knowledge to the absolute which escapes the understanding. De Biran owes a debt to Kant on a point. As de Biran points out, he himself had been inclined to confuse the intimate intuition of our individuality which he calls the ego with the ground of the substance of the mind but he appreciates Kant for having made the necessary distinction between the terms which metaphysicians, including Descartes, have confused, and thus resulting in obscurity. De Biran maintains that there is an essential distinction to

be observed between the ego (moi), in which the self affirms his own individual existence, insofar as he feels or thinks in actuality, and the substance (substance) or the thing thought (chose pensante) from which absolute being is affirmed. In the language of Kant, then, the distinction is between the phenomenal ego and the noumenal ego. With the feeling of the ego, we have knowledge of our phenomenal existence but we have no apperception of the substance of mind. Again, de Biran distinguishes between what we feel or apperceive and that which constitutes an invisible world of substance or cause. For de Biran, therefore, the search for absolutes is illusory, hence, metaphysics becomes a synonym for uncertain hypotheses.⁴

But something has to exist in order to surpass the known facts. What this reveals is a need to believe because an individual cannot suddenly admit to exist the day he appears to himself, nor can he conceive that he disappears once he goes to sleep. We cannot resist in believing that the activity of the ego is attached to a substance, namely an absolute reality of being which remains permanent.⁵

The Limits of the Will and Grace

Maine de Biran believes that the spirit of man loses himself in the ontological excursions towards the absolute unless he first agrees to take as his point of departure, the psychological fact, namely, the feeling of effort which is

its direct expression. Although it is tempting to renounce the attempt to reach the absolute by way of reasoning, de Biran suggests the method of reflection.²¹ De Biran believed that there was a way outside the metaphysical approach for seeking the relation that unites the relative with the absolute. This relation of the ego, is to what is self-sufficient.²² It was de Biran's contention that reflection on concrete experience is necessary to discern the relation between the ego and what surpasses it. Here we see Maine de Biran entering the sphere of morality and religion, those areas which assumes accessibility to that which is immutable. To be sure, de Biran does not want to imitate Descartes or Leibniz, nor to follow the dialectic path of the post-Kantians. In de Biran's view the method concerns concrete experience because morality and religion imply an awareness of some principle which dominates circumstances. De Biran saw the necessity to examine if man upholds such a principle in his moral and religious life. In this way, de Biran puts aside the search for the absolute in favor of the search for a moral foundation. Rather, by way of reason, which seizes essences in things-in-themselves, philosophy, insists de Biran, must interrogate itself on the weakness of man and see if there exists a supreme reality which suffices the aspiration of the soul.²³

From 1815 onwards, de Biran admits that he feels the need to hold on to something which is permanent because

everything escapes or eludes him. Here the question of metaphysics transforms itself in the moral question. In another way, the problem of the absolute is posed in terms of the function of the moral life. What is important to remember, however, is that the question of human effort is always at the bottom of de Biran's inquiries.

At this methodological shift, de Biran seeks within effort itself the principle which responds to the anxiety from which man suffers. Having abandoned the efficacy of metaphysics, de Biran aspires only to something fixed and permanent that would serve as the supreme rule and which would reveal to him, throughout the moral life, that very absolute that reason cannot grasp. De Biran believes that this ideal can be found in the tension of the will as if its tension of effort could necessarily offer to man a solid base.³⁴ De Biran, at this point, is well aware how difficult it is to define effort: to be sure, it cannot be reduced to an organic reaction, nor can it be confused with a spiritual energy. It is made from a gesture, interiorly lived such that no physical phenomenon can give it an exact translation, yet it does not constitute a substance. Is it at all possible to find in human nature that principle that transcends in nature?

It was de Biran's intention to search in voluntary activity the source of all morality as if the will carries immanently that principle to which it aspires.³⁵ De Biran,

at this point states that "dans la conscience du moi repose toute moralité".⁵⁴ It goes without saying that de Biran possessed confidence in the will and was hoping to find in effort the guide that was needed. He thought that the will could provide him with an ideal which would have universal validity and would be the equivalent of an absolute. To resist the impulses of an affectivity that is always unstable and guarantee, within oneself, the reign of a powerful will, would permit the effort to develop itself freely. But in practice such a powerful will does not always surmount organic contradictions and obstacles. As such, it is the task of the effort to face the tyranny of desires and the violence of passions and it is the effort that has the function of procuring peace and stability. At this point de Biran adopts stoicism.⁵⁵

From the position of the stoic, the development of the will is the order of the day; the act of the stoic appears, then, as the development of nature. It is de Biran's belief that effort can raise human beings above themselves. In this way, de Biran is able to say that "c'est dans cette influence supérieure de la volonté sur l'imagination, à l'aide des idées de l'esprit, opposées aux affections et aux instincts, que consiste tout ce qu'il y a de vraiment moral dans l'homme".⁵⁶ It was only a matter of time that de Biran converts to a new belief, namely, that personal effort is, by and large, impotent and that the

energy of the will remains powerless against the confusing impressions of the sensibility. Experience, apart from speculation, taught de Biran the lesson that man is weak, alienated and lives in misery for the most part. De Biran argues that it is a misunderstanding of the real power of the will to think that man has the strength to rise above himself. De Biran concludes that moral stoicism is contrary to human nature. Stoicism believes that the strength of the world can always overcome the passions and desires of nature. Yet, maintains de Biran, Christianity believes in the contrary, namely, that nature, corrupt in itself, is constantly victorious over the spiritual principle, if the superior redemption of grace is not there to help overcome nature. In de Biran's view, then, Stoicism and Christianity are unacceptable but de Biran soon began to lean towards the Christian ideal. De Biran argues at this point that Stoicism is good for those who are already morally strong and possess grand qualities of soul and character. However, for the rest of humanity, poor in spirit, sinners, those with no hope, Christianity is triumphant in giving them a foundation. From this de Biran concludes that it is useless to try to succeed through the efforts of the will. This avowal of impotence is a lesson and this defeat of the human spirit becomes the concern of a new inquiry. Again, de Biran wishes to emphasize that experience teaches us that man is weak. Christianity insisted all along on the misery of man and on the necessity

of divine help. In another manner, de Biran says that reason is powerless to provide motives for the will. Principles, to ground the will, must come from higher.⁵⁹

From here de Biran turns towards God, looking in the depths of his being and in the idea of God for that foundation that is not found anywhere else. There is a mystical aspect to de Biran at this time as he begins to state that the interior light is more clear because it really illuminates the heart and the spirit. Therefore, joy that comes from the exterior is seen as illusory and false. To be true it must come from the view and possession of God within.⁶⁰ There, in the intimacy of being, resides an authentic reality. It is also at this point, having attained quietude, that de Biran begins to ask himself whether this mysterious power, which pulls the soul out of its misery and uplifts it in an enlightening manner, should be given the name grace.⁶¹

De Biran maintains that it is not the 'I', or the will that produces that love and elevated intuition of another order. De Biran realizes now, that he is not free and not the master in control because, at any time, man can be invaded by grace and this very experience excludes the personal initiative of the subject. Mystical experiences occur through no effort on the part of man is what de Biran is suggesting. In the ecstatic moment, something is perceived, which was not premeditated. Therefore, de Biran

concludes that illumination is involuntary and not reducible to any activity of man. Grace, therefore, is a gift and mystical experiences are the effects of divine grace.

We can see that de Biran's thinking becomes more and more Christian in character. De Biran insists that, by nature, grace communicates in a manner that is direct and immediate. The interior revelation brought about by the agency of grace assures man that his limits are not necessary because the revelation of grace allows man to surpass his limits.

The question remains: how does one reconcile the order of human life with the life of the spirit? How do they accord? It is true, the very acts that man accomplishes by his own will do have a certain efficacy. But how is the divine action added on? To conciliate the 'givens' of human experience with the 'givens' of mystical experience is exactly what de Biran now wished to resolve. Again, how do we reconcile the presence and efficacious operation of God's grace with the psychological doctrine of the ego? Against the impotence of the will the individual cannot modify himself because that would only require more effort of the will and the will is impotent. Therefore, from this reasoning, de Biran maintains that human life does not raise itself by nonsensical transitions to the life of grace. There is a rupture and consequently a abrupt leap.⁶²

To accede to a superior height where mystical experience takes place, it is useless to depend on human resources to effect the transition. What de Biran suggests is that we must not raise ourselves, by continuous progress, to

sentiments that have universal values. What is necessary is to renounce oneself. Conversion is quick and that passage from the human order to the mystical order is not by the effort of man but the effect of grace.⁴³ It is divine power that seeks us out and accomplishes that powerful and quick transformation. We cannot obtain what we seek without first having broken with all former habits. Therefore de Biran insists that, on the plan of human order, all conciliation between effort and grace is impossible. One excludes the other; no communication from one to the other is possible. Hence, from that viewpoint, the two orders cannot be reconciled: De Biran, then, sees, in the effects of grace, a manifestation of a power which is of a new order, from the human order. But de Biran is still puzzled how to accord this mysterious power with the deployment of effort.⁴⁴

The issue changes when we are transported onto the spiritual plane because the mystical experience reveals that grace does not abolish nature but instead, divine action adopts itself to human efforts. Maine de Biran had originally been embarrassed to conceive how the "Spirit of Truth" (*l'Esprit de vérité*) could be within us, without being ourselves or identify itself with our own spirit, our self (*moi*).⁴⁵ De Biran, it can be said, hears the internal communication of a superior spirit which talks and fecunds our spirit without confusing itself with ours. This intimate communication of the Spirit with our own is not only a fact

of faith but, also a psychological fact. What de Biran is saying is that mystical states do not add on, by simple juxtaposition, to nature but are linked very narrowly to human life.²⁴ Therefore de Biran is categorical with regards to the existence of a communication between God and the soul. However, he never explains how this rapprochement is to be conceived.²⁵

To be sure, the union of effort and grace cannot be conceived as an act.²⁶ But grace adds to effort in order to prolong it and perfect it. But on the sphere of pure willing, no divine motion is observed. Yet it is inconceivable to separate effort from grace by a sort of rigorous dualism simply because de Biran is certain of the communication between God and the soul. The two lives, the human and the supernatural, do not remain independent and their relationship cannot be defined. Seen from the outside, from the human point of view, seems to imply one willing whose development is pursued by free determinations. Seen from the inside, from God's point of view, it supposes condescension and freedom as if it inclined towards the soul to elevate us. These two aspects are complementary and they hide a profound simplicity. It is a gift which communicates itself and its generosity becomes a call.²⁷ In de Biran's view, the mystery which defines simultaneously the effort and grace is love, which transcends the individual whose outpouring is a work of creative docility where there coincides the soul and

God.⁷⁰ Again, we emphasize de Biran's belief that effort and grace are two aspects of the same act where love asserts itself yet they appear independent. Le Roy summarizes the issue in this way:

... le rapport, qui unissait, dans la vie humaine, les déterminations du vouloir et les mouvements organiques, se retrouve ici, sur le plan de la vie spirituelle, entre le don qui vient de Dieu et l'élan par lequel l'homme répond. Nulle autre explication n'est plus vraisemblable. La grâce vivifie, en leur insufflant sa force, les efforts humains; son effusion s'y achève et les suscite; elle les transfigure, sans les changer: en elle l'homme participe à la vie divine.⁷¹

The revelation of grace is important for Maine de Biran because it allows him to tie and integrate questions that had puzzled him: Now, he is certain that human existence, far from being closed and sufficient, demands and requires "un soutien" and finds in supernatural aid the foundation it needed.⁷² In order to be himself, man has to open up to God. It was not reflection but mystical experience which allowed him to see a divine presence in the depths of the heart. In the face of of grace, nature acquires a particular value. But it must be noted that, for de Biran, spiritual life is not an additive or a juxtaposition to human life.⁷³ At this stage, it was now up to de Biran to describe the spiritual life.

De Biran begins by arguing that above organic reactions and hyperorganic effort there develops a life of pure spirituality which constitutes a new order.⁷⁴ De Biran goes on to say that the spiritual life is not simply

constituted by mystical union, whereby the soul succumbs to the actions of grace; but the spiritual life is also constituted by the efforts which prepares, ahead of time, this union as well as resistances that retard the coming of the union.²⁵ It is, as if, after having surmounted natural deficiencies and is tensed by effort, that the soul receives the benefits. What de Biran means is that grace has to be earned. What are the obstacles that prevent grace and the movement of spiritual life? In de Biran's opinion the obstacles are those of organic nature.²⁶

Maine de Biran maintains that Pascal erred by insisting that human misery can be explained solely on the basis of an original Fall. In de Biran's view, it is organic dispositions that are at the origin of human weakness. This is because the needs of the body contain more than we give credit and consequently, the repercussions are serious. De Biran says that evil has its sources in the perversion of the will and cites the entire Christian tradition from Augustine to Aquinas that defines evil as a perversion of the will which turns away from God towards baser things. De Biran points out that, to conceive the spiritual life as a battle against the corruption of nature, Pascal, simply, reproduced the teachings of the Church. But, this is the traditional teachings that de Biran opposes because he refutes the notion of an original Fall and does not accept that Christian conception of the Fall; thus he does not speak of the

perversion of the will.⁷⁷

De Biran admits that the will is not always equal to itself in addition to the fact that voluntary initiative is intermittent and variable. Yet, in de Biran's mind, the will does not appear as being corrupt. As such, he reserves no place for a moral fault based on the Fall, nor, does he entertain an hypothesis which views the will tending towards evil and falling into vice. What de Biran sees as the problem consists of resistances which prevent the unfolding of the spiritual life and these come from deficiencies of the human being. Consequently, in its union with the body the soul feels all the needs and is obliged to adhere to its desires up to a certain point. Therefore, the obstacles that hinder man are, however, obscured and confused affections. These are the dispositions which are purely organic that the will and reason can oppose, at least, its ideas, but is incapable of changing and fighting directly.⁷⁸ These affections constitute a dressing which either weighs down the will or slows it down but it is not a principle which effort has to destroy. Again, there is no need to seek theological explanations as to where human weakness originates. The spiritual quest is held back by the organic body. In this manner the body slows down the efforts of man who wishes to open up to grace as well as being a source of human shortcomings and weaknesses. To attain the spiritual plane De Biran insists that man has to overcome the resistances that

stem from organic nature.⁷⁹ In effect, then, the body is not an enemy that one is to destroy but rather a problem that has to be surmounted. However it is important to keep in mind that for de Biran there is no continuity in the transition from the organic nature to that of grace. Man does not reach up for grace; it only comes down to man as a free gift.

De Biran believes, however, that the method which allows one to surmount the obstacles and resistances is to separate oneself from the demands of the body and place oneself above everything of the senses. In addition, there are three routes by which one arrives at the desired spiritual avenue. The first plan is psychological. It consists of the desire, the willing and the effort to overcome the animal stage of life. Secondly, there has to be prayer that is added on to effort; in this case, prayer is a means of calling for the help of God. Finally, man has to believe; he has to have faith in God. Only then can grace come down and burst into human nature.⁸⁰ But it must be remembered that in spite of man's efforts, his call and his merit, there is no guarantee that man will receive the help that he needs. The ways of God are unknown is what de Biran suggests.⁸¹ In this way we are assured that grace is a free gift. It is not necessarily gained through the efforts of a preparation. Grace is supernatural because it completes nature. It does not destroy nature.

It may be noted that de Biran believes that this

blossoming of grace, which assures the participation of the entire man in the spiritual life and which elevates his nature, appears in its highest degree in the person of Christ.²² In man, de Biran argues, grace puts us in a passive state of being. It does away with all desire and all personal activity. It results in the cessation of the self and a merging of the subject with the object.²³ In addition, man loses his personality with his freedom. De Biran is convinced that this passivity that characterizes the spiritual life is like those described by the great Christian mystics.²⁴ However, de Biran suggests that this passivity does not imply a total annihilation of the human being. De Biran refutes any kind of pantheism and categorically affirms the permanency of the personal soul during these higher states.²⁵ De Biran believes that it is important to realize that, in recognizing a life of the spirit, superior to the human and animal life, does not in fact destroy the lower orders but rather elevate, enhance and enrich them. It is worth noting that for de Biran the religious life has no higher form than that mystical experience which has a short duration, after which one returns to humanity and its everyday occupations.²⁶

In summary, therefore, we can say that the concerns of de Biran went through several stages of development. At the very beginning he was concerned with the moral problem of man and the meaning of life. Seen in terms of an opposition

between activity and passivity, he wished to find a permanent ground that would irrevocably explain human existence. The connection between consciousness and moral awareness became too obvious to him to pass up and therefore, sought the primitive fact of all existence. The foundation of subjectivity resided in the hyperorganic operation called effort. From this de Biran was seduced into Stoicism because voluntary action seemed to be the only answer to man's moral plight. But when the efforts of the will proved to be in vain de Biran turned towards the realization of grace in the Christian sense of a gift as the real solution to the moral destiny of man. It was de Biran's view that man has a triple nature, the animal life, the human life and the spiritual life but the total transformation can only come when man is touched by divine grace and that man's fulfillment comes about when he submits to the experience of the supernatural. The comparison with Blondel cannot be ignored. Therefore, in ending this section it seems necessary to provide a schemata of the connections that can be made of the two in order to clarify the thread that runs from de Biran to Blondel as it has already been suggested:

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Maine de Biran</u>	<u>Blondel</u>
Moral Problem	Double nature of man: active and passive; willing and being willed	Double nature of the will: volonté voulue" and "volonté voulante".
Foundation	"l'effort"	"l'action"

Method	Psychological	Philosophical
Solution	Limits of the will; need for grace, mysticism	Limits of willing; need for grace; literal religious practice.
History of Philosophy	Steers between Descartes' rationalism and empiricism of Locke	Synthesis of Kant's idealism and realism of Spinoza.

We cannot underestimate the importance of Maine de Biran in French philosophy. His influence is felt everywhere and nowhere is it more evident than in the philosophical method of Jean Nabert (1881-1960).⁹⁷ But the importance of Nabert has to be stressed and we use him here, in comparison with Blondel, only to secure what this thesis argues, namely, that L'Action (1893) not only provides a grounding for ethics but also that it is an early attempt of what Ricoeur calls a "poetics of the will".⁹⁸ This will be the focus of the next part of this chapter.

Blondel and Jean Nabert's Ethical Elements

The Foundations of Reflection

Reflexive Philosophy

We noticed that in Blondel's L'Action there was no mention of fault, guilt and solitude. The dialectic simply points to the inadequation between the two wills without spelling out exactly what this entails. Paul Ricoeur made an

astute remark which gives us much to think about when he said that Blondel's "method of immanence" is also a "method of innocence".⁸² It is Ricoeur's belief that Blondel underestimates the "difficulties of the method of immanence, in particular those which proceed from the accident of the fault".⁸³ This is because guilty freedom "blocks the access to its own surpassing".⁸⁴ As Ricoeur points out,

... the use of the method of immanence is inseparable from a deliverance of freedom by a Transcendence which becomes immanent to the extent to which the will purifies itself in becoming actively associated with its own liberation. Perhaps after all the work of Maurice Blondel is not only a method of immanence, but also a method of innocence. I often have the impression that through all the detours of Eidetics, Empirics, and Poetics of the will there runs the search for an operous assurance which, to Blondel, is already given ...⁸⁵

This is why I suggest that we should compare Blondel with Nabert who corrects the innocence of Blondel, thus, assuring us of the possibility of the grounding of ethics through the unifying concept of action.⁸⁶ We make note of the fact, however, that Nabert is concerned with acts while Blondel used action in a broad and cosmic sense.⁸⁷ In addition, by employing Nabert's definition of ethics as "the reasoned history of our desire to be" to Blondel's L'Action, we can argue that Blondel's work be viewed as a foundation for ethics and not merely seen as a work of Christian apologetics.

It was the merit of Nabert to have made the distinction, quite clearly, between "la philosophie réflexive", a reflection in which it is the absolute that

reflects itself in the movement of an individual consciousness, with a reflection which constitutes the subject itself and recaptures, while immanent to its operations, the laws and norms of spiritual activities in all its domains.⁹⁵ With regards to the first,

"la régression analytique coïncide avec le mouvement au cours duquel une conscience finie découvre qu'elle tient tout son être de l'Être qui se réfléchit en elle et lui donne aussi l'élan nécessaire pour rejoindre son principe".⁹⁶

In that perspective, reflection is a return of a finite consciousness to its source.⁹⁷ In opposition to this, there is a different kind of reflective philosophy in which,

la réflexion ramène essentiellement au sujet aux opérations dont il répond, dans une perspective d'immanence, où ce qui est en question, ce n'est pas tant la relation d'une pensée finie à la pensée infinie que la relation d'une conscience individuelle à cette conscience que, depuis Kant, on appelle conscience constituante qu'elle fonde l'opposition de l'acte et de l'événement au même titre que l'opposition entre une nécessité interne, toute spirituelle et la nécessité observable dans le monde des faits et dans l'univers.⁹⁸

Nabert insists that true reflection is the method of always considering the spirit in its acts and in its productions in order to appropriate their significations and their truths - but essentially in its initial act, by which the subject is certain of its existence and its power.⁹⁹ The difference here with Blondel is that reflective philosophy in this sense considers the act while Blondel takes on action as the experience that lends itself to the appropriation. But what is the spiritual act which best lends itself to the reflective experience? The answer is that there are various choices: the

act of thinking, the judgement, the affirmation, the creation of the sign, the immediate apperception of the 'I' in the primitive fact of effort.¹⁰⁰ But whatever the act, there are two essential traits: first, the difference between reflection and intuition is cancelled; secondly, it is renewable by a decision which suspends spontaneity to allow a character of a temporality and eternity to emerge. In this manner, the subject can recapture himself and assure himself of his existence. The issue here is that the act opens up to reflection.¹⁰¹

From all of this reflective analysis has engaged itself either in deepening the intimacy of the self or find in the operation of the knowing subject the conditions of possibility of real experience. For example, in Descartes' 'Cogito, ergo sum', the starting point of reflection may be either the 'I think' (Kant) or the 'I am' (Maine de Biran). Hence, from the Cartesian shift to the subject we see the two currents or directions of reflective philosophy. However, with great insight, Nabert is able to signal the weakness and the strength of both approaches in this manner:

Encore que l'analyse biranienne ait échoué à faire sortir de l'expérience du fait primitif les formes, les catégories de la connaissance objective, et à garantir leur valeur, elle a cependant favorisé une étude réflexive de la conscience sensible et de la perception, tandis que, d'autre part, la conscience transcendente, avec ses exigences d'objectivité, a empêché que les actes et les fins du moi concret ne se dérobaient aux impératifs et aux normes de la pensée rationnelle.¹⁰²

Ultimately, reflection must not leave outside of the

other, the intimacy of consciousness and the universality of reason. Kantian criticism, in its concern to justify science had neglected the analysis of perception and spatial functions. Such a position, it seems, would have broken the continuity between the exercise of thought at the level of sensible consciousness and at the level of scientific consciousness. French reflective philosophy, however, did not neglect to disclose the activity of the subject in elementary forms of knowledge.¹⁰² From this perspective, Nabert asks whether reflective philosophy is capable of appropriating concrete experiences of which the destiny of the self is concrete. This, of course, signals de Biran's line of reflective philosophy. To be sure, we have seen that the analysis of the 'fait primitif', grounded on the immediate consciousness of a link between an act of the subject and the resistance which it encounters had opened up the possibility of further researches. French philosophy, it must be said, had promoted a consciousness of the self which is characterized by this sense of self-intimacy which is, rightly, absent from German critical thought.¹⁰³ Nabert points out that the method of reflection can correct a moral philosophy whose inefficiency is apparent when the moral philosophy limits itself by opposing the dignity of duty with everything that proceeds from nature.¹⁰⁴ To bear this out, Ricoeur has pointed out that Nabert's work from L'Expérience intérieure de la liberté (1924) to Essai sur le mal (1955)

tends to distinguish between reflection and critique.¹⁰⁴

But here we must understand what the distinction between reflection and critique really mean. Ricoeur provides us with the issue:

The principle task of a critique is to disassociate the a priori conditions of the possibility of experience from all empirical genesis and from all a posteriori accretions. In this sense, the moral philosophy of Kant is still a critique in that it abstracts the reflective analysis of good will according to the model used by the reflective analysis of true knowledge. It is this parallelism which requires one to separate, in one's search for the principle of morality, the a priori from the empirical and, by way of consequence, the formalism of duty from the pathology of desire. Formalism in moral philosophy is then the result of the transposition onto the practical level of a critique of knowledge. It simply brings into the domain of action the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical which belongs to the critique. By developing a reflection on action, conceived as irreducible to any critique of knowledge, Jean Nabert undeniably takes up a position in the tradition of Maine de Biran. Even more, by applying reflection to the movement by which we attempt to appropriate for ourselves the primary affirmation from which we are in some manner separated or from which we have fallen, Jean Nabert rediscovers a meaning of "Ethics" which is closer to Spinoza than it is to Kant. To the distinction between critique and reflection corresponds a similar distinction between moral philosophy and ethic. Since Kant, moral philosophy uses the idea of duty; this idea is inseparable from a "critique" of good will which disassociates the rational form of the imperative from the matter of desire. In this sense, the ethic of Jean Nabert is not at all a moral philosophy. Ethic means for him the reasoned history of our effort to exist, of our desire to be.¹⁰⁷

It is from this understanding of ethics that we approach Blondel's L'Action which I understand to be a 'reasoned history of our desire to be' for Blondel himself could have uttered these words of Nabert:

① For every individual, his history is the history of this desire, of the radical ignorance of self in which he

first finds himself; of the errors into which he allowed himself to be dragged, of the seductions which abused him, and, in the course of the failures which he experienced, of the light finally thrown on his true orientation. No matter how contingent this history is for every consciousness, an ethic must determine its essential moments and thus aid in the enlightenment of the deep will of the individual. The ethic does not prescribe; it reflects on a becoming whose beginning, palpably identical for all, it discerns and whose ideal direction it seeks to discover An ethic can only offer itself as the structure of a concrete history which each self begins again and which it does not always complete.¹⁰⁹

The Starting Point of Reflection

Ricoeur points out that the philosopher of reflection does not seek a radical point of departure simply because he is already himself the starting point - he has already experience, but in a "mode of feeling"¹¹⁰ What has to be done to this felt experience is that it needs to be understood, to be "regrasped".¹¹¹ From this we can conclude with Ricoeur that "reflection is desire", not intuition of self, nor contemplation and enjoyment of one's being.¹¹² Therefore reflective philosophy does not begin by stating or setting forth a 'first truth' - its enterprise consists in revealing the structures that precede reflection, in other words it seeks the structures of spontaneous consciousness.

We begin by noting that Nabert's 'givens' of reflection are the experiences of fault, failure and solitude.¹¹³ Nabert begins by noting the two ways in which the self treats its self-actualization and its self-disclosure. In the first place it strives for knowledge

of its own history, at the same time it frees itself from self-interest; secondly, it can seek "not only to recapture and understand itself by reading the text which its actions have constituted, but also to make this understanding coincide with a regeneration of its being".¹¹² Nabert believes that the act of reflection is ample evidence for the fact that "the self grasps and affirms itself as a power, creative of history, binding a pure self which makes up the entire moral substance of its being and a nature which it can neither disavow nor repudiate without condemning itself to impotency and unreality."¹¹⁴ In this way reflection "remains linked to feelings which accompany the total moral experience".¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Nabert states that "these feelings ... make reflection, although free, appear as a moment within the history of the desire that is constitutive of our being".¹¹⁶ The feelings that Nabert refer to are linked to the experience of solitude, failure and fault, the feelings that accompany the inadequation of the will in conflict. In Blondel's view, reflection on the inadequation of the conflicting wills reveal a felt exigency of a unique necessary towards which the whole moral experience is ordered. Nabert, in a similar way, maintains that "immanent in moral experience, reflection on failure, fault and solitude not only reveals the structures permitting us to understand the limits of satisfaction; it also directs itself to the affirmation toward which the entire moral experience

is ordered".¹¹⁷ While Blondel reveals to us the inadequacy of willing within action, Nabert maintains that as consciousness experiences its own contingency by reflecting on the ~~Past~~, it can propose "to discover beneath the contingency, beneath the accidents and particularities ... the elements of fault, failure and solitude and the twofold relationship disclosed by the experience of them, viz., a relationship to a nonbeing diffused in them and a relationship to a certitude which is at the same time a compensation for nonbeing and the foundation of its own limitation".¹¹⁸ In a similar vein, this was also disclosed by Blondel's reflection on the exigency of action and on how we inadequately live up to expectations due to conflicts both within and without which offers to us a full view of the limitation inherent in human willing. In the panorama of action we have long forgotten what we had willed and failed to have willed it and what we had not willed and end up willing it even against our will. Such an inadequation of a primordial will and a decision-making will can only result in the feelings of failure, fault and solitude. Blondel's reflection on his phenomenological result showed how the unfolding of the will is always limited by the finite goal it reaches because the primitive will always wished for more. Blondel looked back upon action in order to look forward beyond action.

Nabert maintains that the self in reflection relies

on memories in order to "deepen the feeling," at first confused, of a constantly renewed experience of difference between the real unfolding of its being in the world and the idea of a causality where it would truly be equal to itself".¹¹⁹ Blondel had pointed out on numerous occasions to the insufficiency of ends that had solicited the will, and such ends were questioned yet made possible the eternal exigency of action. Nabert points out that "no matter how episodic our action has been, no matter how loosely linked it has been to the permanent and lasting options of the self, through the suffering which it occasions action provokes a fundamental questioning of our value".¹²⁰ Nabert is saying that willing fails to contain "the feeling of fault within the limits of the action which provoked it".¹²¹ While reflection on the deployment of the will suggested to Blondel the reality of a greater destiny at hand, Nabert equally points out that what "reflection of the self on fault ... must allow us to discover is the real order of the conditions of feelings and experiences which we include under the simple title of moral experience".¹²² But Nabert warns us of rationalizing moral experience in a way that "neglects going back to more hidden sources of moral experience".¹²³

It can be said that Blondel's enterprise had been to discover by way of implication the unfolding of a moral destiny required by actions. We may add that Blondel's reflection on the phenomena of action was the attempt to

liberate this primitive willing in order that it return to the source of its being.¹²⁴ Nabert's reflective philosophy has the same similar goal of liberating the self from its own determinisms. Nabert writes:

It seems, then, that within the experience of fault the relationship of consciousness to its past cannot be separated from the movement of reflection which must both disclose the conditions of consciousness of self and return the self to possession of its being. Far from being a sterile return to a distant past, reflection is not distinguished from the operations by which the self gets hold of itself at the very moment that it attempts to go to the roots of its being. The moment of reflection are for the self the moments of its liberation because they advance it toward the certitude which is the source of all its hope.¹²⁵

But Nabert points out that "what consciousness experiences from the very start is the impossibility in which it finds itself of appropriating wholly the productive causality of the action which it considers a fault".¹²⁶ In the same manner that Blondel kept pointing to the inadequacy of the will when performing actions, especially duties, because we do not understand what lies behind them, so too, then, Nabert suggests that "nothing is more real than the feeling that we have remained inadequate to ourselves and that we have not responded to a secret appeal which we hear" and that the feeling of dissatisfaction "becomes richer with meaning" because "it relates to the experience of an ever renewed difference between what really makes up the causality of the self and what it should be capable of in order for the self to be equal to its true being".¹²⁷ What begins to emerge here as we go back and forth between Blondel and Nabert is

that while Blondel is concerned with action Nabert is dealing with acts of the self. My suggestion is that Nabert's concern is with a microcosm of Blondel's concern, and I may add, gives to the innocence of Blondel a concrete expression of experiential existence in the form of fault, failure, and solitude in so far as I believe that constitute the subjective residues of that inadequation between the 'volonté voulante' and the 'volonté voulue'.

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Reflection, as desire that unfolds, "verifies the impossibility of disassociating the operation by which we save ourselves and the operation by which we discover the principle which saves us, proceeds, indeed, from an exigency of integrity"¹². Blondel had concluded to the one thing necessary because it, was from the very beginning the principle immanent to the exigency of action. In other words, we are led to that which leads us. Nabert writes:

Therefore, it is true that moral experience is not limited to personal faults which we remember but is tied to a fundamental metaphysical experience.... There persists ... the experience of a destiny united to a past which reflection has the right to affirm and recognize without being able to illuminate it completely.¹³

Nabert maintains that the being of the self is constituted by two relationships: by "a relationship to a past" which for Blondel constitutes the total series of determinisms and, secondly, by "a relationship to the principle from which it draws its desire for existence and its strength, for regeneration" which for Blondel is the uniquely necessary.¹⁴ Nabert goes on to say that the "movement of reflection ... is also a promise of liberation" and for Blondel we may add that reflection on the inadequacy of the will to itself also offers the promise of a liberation by offering to consciousness the option from which may emerge the fullness and crowning of human destiny: fault, for Nabert, allows the discernment of an inner necessity which enlists "the past in the service of the future".¹⁵

In the second of Nabert's 'givens' of reflection,

namely, failure, we see that "consciousness reproaches itself ... for having hoped for and desired the very thing which escapes it".¹²¹ But the problem with the feeling of fault is that there is a problem of causality. This is what Nabert writes:

Even when the failure of some initiative is properly explained by causes outside the power of the will, it is sufficient that this initiative had initially a moral character for consciousness to be inclined to trace responsibility for the consequences back to its inner act and not to differentiate between failure and fault. Undoubtedly it is true that these causes or conditions in many cases are directly or indirectly dependent on the will. This is so much the case that consciousness has only to follow its natural bent to substitute, for reflection on failure, the avowal of its guilt or a search for responsibility. The primacy of moral causality¹²² is opposed to the recognition of failure and distracts reflection from considering independently a problem which, as far as the relationships between value and being are concerned, is as important as the problem of fault. In fact, it covers the whole field of these relationships. Strictly speaking, sovereignly independent morality cannot take in its selfjudgement, take into account the way in which the world and other minds welcome it. Failure, on the other hand, redirects our attention to the characteristic of all value to be fully itself only if it is efficacious, if it is ratified in some way by the real, if its expansion in the world is not always opposed or denied. The more that moral values are concentrated in the formal intention of willing or are detached from this willing and constituted as essences, the more do they require reflection to understand the meaning of the failure which moral values seem to experience when the will, using them as rules, tries to incarnate them in the real.¹²³

The difficulty, it seems, lies in the judgement of failure because the adequacy of an idea and its realization is problematic. In order to discover the source of failure one needs to return to the act where the idea "seems in some way superior to the realization which it announces and all of

whose value it already contains in advance"¹²² And, in a way that Blondel would have phrased it, Nabert believes that "beneath the idea there is a more secret and more intimate act".¹²³ In Blondel's perspective beneath the idea there resides an aspiration that is engendered by a final cause.

Nabert warns us that "when the act, instead of grasping and understanding itself within the operation in which it unfolds, settles into an idea which subsequently must know realization, it opens the door to failure".¹²⁴

The full meaning of failure appears only when the self has stopped feeling inferior to its deepest possibilities".¹²⁵

For Nabert, failure is concrete, yet like Blondel's assesement of the inadequate measure of the will, he maintains that,

Culture, in its totality, gives man an idea of self which lifts him far above the animal kingdom but which does not reach his real being. This inequality, this dissymmetry, between man as he is in the works which he adds to nature and "as he is in his authentic being, could be the starting point for reflection on failure. It would keep consciousness from assimilating the being of man to the being that creates culture. However, once man has given himself language, signs and symbols which he can fulfill and change indefinitely, man has given himself at the same time the means with which to trick himself. His works change him less than they change the signs in which he believes he recognizes himself. Thus is created a kind of mirage, which disappears suddenly when it is necessary for the self to tear away from itself to create itself in an operation in which its own act and its being are but one. This is why reflection on failure begins in all cases with an act of renunciation which delivers us, not from failure, but from the forgetting of failure and from the illusions which hide it from us.¹²⁶

The importance of solitude as the third 'given' of

reflection is highlighted by Nabert:

The experience of fault, even though at first it has a merely moral character, gives access in reflection to a metaphysical experience which confers on it a new meaning at the level of action. In like manner, concrete relations among minds which respond to the demands of the moral law within communities and groups would not have all their depth, if they did not depend on an experience of solitude. At first they set out to occasion solitude, but in deepening itself, solitude gives them a richness which in any other case they would not have had. When interpersonal relations have a specifically moral character, they make us desire and call for, as much as they already presuppose, minds capable of saying 'we' and of breaking the bounds of individuality. However, only minds which have experienced solitude can truly say 'we' and can consider moral relations which bind them to other beings as the beginning, the means, and the preparation for a deeper friendship which has its guarantee in the certitudes which solitude allowed one to attain.

But Nabert is quick to warn us that "the breaking of the moral world in all its forms has its origin in the danger which solitude brings about when, instead of being the starting point for a deepening of self, it suggests to consciousness that it might be self-sufficient".

Solitude tells the self that it is no less separated from itself than from others. When consciousness, while separated from communication, which engendered the sense of self in the first place, takes possession of itself, independent of communication, it initiates the feeling of solitude. Self-sufficiency is accompanied by the feeling of solitude. Therefore, just as "reflection on fault involves the beginning of regeneration ... likewise, the deepening of solitude ... intensifies the experience of our impoverishment only to allow us to find in it the assurance of help which

cannot betray us" but as Nabert continues to say, "this deeper awareness of solitude could not happen except through an action in us of something which wholly transcends us".¹⁴⁰

Nabert is saying that the deepening of solitude coincides with the beginning of self regeneration. Therefore, "solitude is a primary fact" and it does not coincide with "consciousness of ego" but "within nostalgia for an impossible unity and in the hopeless desire to absolutely escape solitude, minds give to one another possession of self".¹⁴¹

We see from Nabert that consciousness is linked to reason and that reflection does not fall into the irrational. What Nabert suggests is that feeling itself is structured such that freedom's itinerary can unfold, thus, allowing reflection to understand its history, its destiny. Blondel, we recall, suggested that reflection is in the service of understanding the itinerary of willing which, in Blondel, was featured in terms of an inadequation that forever enforces an unrequited primordial desire. In Nabert's estimate, reflection is a moment in the experience which goes from action in its spontaneity to reflection on action, and from reflection to full consciousness of self, and then returns to goals and to the world".¹⁴² What we note is that in Nabert's scheme, reflection safeguards the itinerary of consciousness. It is a self-authenticating moment by which consciousness awakens to a new ethical horizon. And in a way

that echoes Blondel's L'Action, Nabert states that

No matter what differences there are between the experience of fault, failure and solitude, the feelings which they occasion or which accompany them are sufficiently similar to appear as the expression of a fundamental feeling which translates the inadequacy of ourselves to ourselves or of the being which we become to our true being which betray incompleteness in the fulfillment of its desire, even weakness in its willing.¹⁴³

Primary Affirmations

But why did it become necessary to reflect on the 'givens', namely, failure, fault, solitude? In a simple way, it entails a shift from ignorance to knowledge. It must be pointed out that ~~the~~ negative aspects of the fundamental desire are included as "part of the domain of an ethic".¹⁴⁴ Reflection is the "effort of consciousness to understand itself".¹⁴⁵ Nabert points out that "the determination of the reflective givens already involves an intention which is like a first act, by which the subject, working, to understand himself, molds himself" and indeed, "the principle through which the subject of reflection will understand himself must be immanent not only in the operations guiding consciousness toward the principles but also in the experiences which are at the starting point of the entire reflexive search".¹⁴⁶ We can safely say that for Blondel reflection is very much also inseparable from the intentionality of the desire to be. But Nabert warns us against consciousness falling to the level of the 'givens', while grasping itself, because

"nonbeing slips into our desire to be ... as much as into our acts".¹⁴⁷ Because nonbeing prohibits an understanding of the self, it is imperative that consciousness attempts the search for certitude of the self which is concrete because it secretly sustains willing. The point is that the being of the self can only come from the understanding which it acquires through an affirmation that regenerates it. This is necessary, otherwise the self would remain separated from its source. What is important to note here is that it is the certitude of one's being that makes possible the reflection on its becoming an initial step in its salvation. As Nabert states it, "it is by the I am that the self can subsequently have a history which a certitude unchangeable in its principle dominates and judges".¹⁴⁸ Blondel had never posited the certitude of the 'I am' because it is tacitly implied in the certitude of willing. But the certitude of the 'I am' assures the efficacy of reflective philosophy. Otherwise it would be absurd to suggest a non-self is reflecting on its becoming. What is addressed to the self is nothing less than the fact that in the world, within time, through duty and sacrifice, the self verifies the 'I am'. In Nabert's words, "the 'I am' ... is nothing less than the absolute affirmation affirming itself through the act of a consciousness which becomes consciousness of self at the very moment that it discovers that it is not in virtue of itself".¹⁴⁹ The certainty of pure consciousness is

important to ascertain as subject and object of reflexivity, otherwise "every ethic is doomed to impotency" if it does not require that the true powers of the human soul corresponds to conditions by which it is defined in reflection.¹²⁰ The relationship of an interior act to the knowledge that it has of itself, both in terms of motives and in the imagination in which it unfolds its first movements, corresponds to the relationship of pure consciousness of self to the concrete self. From this view, the self must forgo the hope of ever being equal to itself and still always strive for this" which echoes in a certain measure the insufficiency of the will. But there is always an anticipation of a certitude can solve the problem of the self. The futurity of self-regeneration is pointed out by Nabert when he says that "the recollection of consciousness based on primary certitude, makes it possible for the life of the self, in the practice of morality, to trust in hope and resolve to the future its full worth".¹²¹

At this point we may say that the reflective movement towards primary affirmations liberates the self from the snare of desire in order to verify this certitude, as the self becomes more lucid in its self-awareness the "inadequation of existence to itself" undergoes a change in meaning.¹²² The alteration between a concentration of the self at its source and its expansion in the world is highlighted by Nabert at this point because the alteration

and alliance of reflection "which returns to its principle, and of the promotion of existence in action is found at all levels of an ethic".¹⁵³ Nabert insists that as long as the self "has not found the way to read itself in the text which it traces in its own acts, it cannot understand the relationship ... the between pure consciousness of self and real existence".¹⁵⁴ This relationship is recognized as being the foundation of the idea of value. We may recall here that Blondel's values, created and promoted by the deployment of the will, consisted of the series of determinisms - consciousness, science, social life, family, country, humanity, religion. These were deemed values in the measure that they required that we will them infinitely; hence, as goals, their very being could not be exhausted. In a similar vein, Nabert believes that "value would not be value if it did not have in it something which makes us think that it does not exhaust the principle which it symbolizes or verifies".¹⁵⁵ However it is important to take note of the fact that at the root of value there lies a principle which cannot itself be a value simply, because, the act of pure consciousness is beyond value. Value arises when pure affirmation, the becoming idea or infinite exigency exposes itself to resistances. Value is contingent on desire. Pure intention must therefore, involve the consent and adherence of subjectivity and ultimate value resides in the whole. In this way we may say that values simply rise by our

participation in the whole. Nabert maintains that "the values of action, the values of an ethic properly speaking, are linked to the effort incumbent on the individual consciousness to place itself in its own truth, that is, in the truth of the whole".¹²⁰ We saw in Blondel's philosophy of action, how values require from the subject an infinite willing of a totality inherent in the object willed. This is to say that values are measured by the infinity that resides in the least object. It is this satiety in the infiniteness inherent in goals that provides the feeling that our separated self has been redeemed. Nabert states that values "are evidence of the imperfection inherent in a consciousness which draws on a premonition of a total being for the force which it uses to break the illusion of separation and of isolation of beings in being".¹²¹ This allows for an analysis of the intentions of different orders of values. Spontaneity converts into pure intention and only through the latter can there be a creation of value in action. In this way there is a liaison between pure intention and the forms of values. What reflection attempts to do in this case is rediscover the pure intention which is the principle of value. Reflection also rediscovers the spontaneous movements out of which arose the intentions which transcends nature.

It is important, therefore to realize that, pure intentions and generative acts of value and the inexhaustible source, from which all proceed, become perceptible to

consciousness through the text of action and effort. By the affirmation of pure intention over desire and over nature, value becomes, therefore, the phenomenon, Nabert suggests,

That there is in this act a surplus which The expression does not exhaust and does not transmit into the phenomenon and value is verifiable only in and through the value, where the operation from which it proceeds and the sensible world in which it is enveloped interpenetrate. If the entire sensible world and all the beings with which we have dealings sometimes appear to us as a text to be deciphered, as the manifestation and appearance of an operation which was not able to find another expression, it is because the value in fact orders us to seek and discern the aspiration inscribed in our gropings, weaknesses, and failures of expression. At the level of phenomenon, one never absolutely loses track of the operation which gives it a different meaning from the one it receives from the law and the linking of other phenomena in which it is grouped.

We recall how Blondel had maintained that art or science express a primordial ~~will~~ willing which intends to find an absolute value wrapped in the concrete finite, and maintained hence, that its satisfaction and yearning for something more betrayed an intrinsic signification. On the values of existence and action, Nabert points out that "what we grasp in them... is the generative process of the being of the self... the act of being and the act of being worthwhile".¹⁵ What occupies us next is the generative process of the self's becoming.

The Itinerary of Consciousness

Inclination and Ascent

We can ask at this point with Nabert whether the

self is still concerned with itself when it no longer defines itself by its inclinations, but rather according to possibilities of existence which, of course, is not inscribed to its given nature. Two questions are asked by Nabert:

To what should we relate a desire which comes from no particular tendency but which would reject no one of them as radically incompatible with itself? To what should we relate a desire whose satisfactions are not to be confused with the satisfactions of natural tendencies but which appropriate these tendencies, a desire which neither the weakening nor the decay of tendencies would exhaust and which has need of these tendencies only to borrow from them a very weak strength without giving away any of its own strength?¹²⁰

Nabert goes on to say that in the same way that instincts and tendencies allow the satiety of desire to last but a moment, likewise, "this pure inclination is satisfied only for an instant by the success of goals which transcend those of nature".¹²¹ It is true, as Nabert mentions, that no inclination of nature corresponds to this desire. What appears, at first as a production of an interest that is exempt from sensual attraction, is a conversion which makes natural desire docile for goals originally not its own. This conversion allows pure inclination to participate in the pursuit of goals. But what is this inclination? Can objective knowledge of this inclination liberate the self? These are problematic issues in the sense that consciousness "must define itself as the experience of separation".¹²²

This separation changes meaning, it seems, when the effort of the self to be equal to itself is expressed. At the level of inclination, action speeds up the moment of

satisfaction but what surprises consciousness is that it is impossible to exhaust the energy of the tendency in a manner other than objects. The feeling of the contrast between the death of inclination and the satisfaction that one obtains in the search for an object is the measurement of consciousness in which desire is born. Thus, one enlightens this tendency by making it in the service of a goal that is capable of satisfying an aspiration that is no longer identified with inclination alone. Once desire is no longer imprisoned in the relationship between inclination and object, it becomes or converts into another kind of desire. We can say that subjectivity appropriates inclination for a goal. Now, we must remember that the goal transcends inclination. What we have here is a revelation of the paradox in ethics: "that the roots of inclination must never be cut, that the sap of inclination must circulate within goals most distant from the primary function of this tendency". But the conversion of consciousness to itself only occurs when inclination is emptied of its substance.

The dialectic of aspiration has to arouse the concrete relationship between nature and a desire and this dialectic is produced in the presence of tendencies that appear to rival each other. Nabert reminds us how often philosophical doctrines would try to reduce the diversity of tendencies to the unity of one original tendency. But why? Nabert writes:

These doctrines do not proceed, as they claim, from observation of facts and human nature or even essentially from a theoretical exigency, from the exigency of understanding directing itself toward a unitary explanation of behavior. It is evident that the concern for explanation is dominated in them by the attempt to link a philosophy of action to theoretical or objective knowledge. Using the science of man, it is an effort to illuminate action in such a way that man, beneath all the changes which social life or any other cause might effect in the original movement of inclination, would want what he already wanted and what he cannot cease wanting once he comes back to himself. This question is nothing less than that of resting the terminus ad quem which every philosophy of action secretly envisions on a terminus a quo furnished by nature. Since it is impossible to deny the deep desire of the self, which is desire of unity, the initial unity of the tendency seems the surest way to give foundations to the unity which action and morality seek to realize. Then it would only be a question of rediscovering the original tendency, of giving it full self-consciousness as well as consciousness of its direction. Just as hope often expresses itself by belief in a past golden age, so the unity envisioned and desired becomes, retroactively, the naturalistic unity of an inclination which allowed itself to fall into disunity and which has strayed from its deep desire.¹⁰⁰

This naturalistic interpretation of man through the unity of a fundamental tendency coincides with that given by philosophers inspired by the opposite principles: "the same blindness, the same ignorance of consciousness with respect to its essential desire, the same dissolution of the tendency, the same orientation of the whole being toward the possession of the self".¹⁰¹ Nabert continues,

It is the surpassing of inclination that one hopes to obtain through the metamorphoses of inclination. It is so for the tendency to perseverance in being, for self-love, for the tendency to satisfaction, for the will to power. Without leaving inclination, it is something like a displacement of inclination that one anticipates. In the context of a naturalistic monism, admitted in principle, one anticipates a liberation from nature itself.¹⁰²

In Nabert's estimate the natural unity of inclination can

only be an explanatory hypothesis, always opposed by the fact of apparent plurality of tendencies and objects which satisfy it. Nabert believes that, on the other hand, "the teleological ~~unity~~ of inclination would mark the achievement of an aspiration which finds in the disaccord of tendencies the opposition by which it gets hold of itself in the guise of a desire which does not have its source in nature".

What Nabert is saying is that if one admits the unity of a primitive unity that became divided against itself, then, one has to consider that the teleological unity of a will has a superficial resemblance to this inclination inasmuch as it imitates it. Yet the foundation is different. Nabert reminds us that from the outside view, nothing allows us to distinguish the operation of a will which is already outside of life from the operation of a will which is a prisoner of instinct, unless, of course, it is instinct itself. Only consciousness can attempt to understand whether the energy of its will stems from an attachment to life as such or to a goal which wishes to consume this life. Nabert sees the problem can be resolved by "seeking the conditions of possibility for an integration of tendencies by means of an aspiration which is at once similar and contrary to the original unity of inclination". Nabert is suggesting that, by conceiving the genesis of higher values, it can result in the integration of tendencies.

But if integration of the inclinations of nature

reveals to oneself an aspiration such that its development is seen to be identical to the development of existence, it also brings along a new problem. Integration forbids one to determine the relationship between goals. Hence, the goal of pure will is not identified with the aspirations at the heart of the will. Therefore the goals are sought for themselves rather than for the value affecting the action that produces them. But what are values? Nabert answers that values "are modes in which a real consciousness in its commerce with the world verifies its own relationship to pure consciousness".¹⁴ But this verification is made indirectly by "means of goals and tasks for which the will acts".¹⁵ In every creative act, therefore, the intention turns away from itself and this intention can detect itself "in the goal toward which the will is directed" or "in the outline of a task".¹⁶ We may then ask, what are goals? Nabert answers:

Either one considers goals as purely symbolic of a willing which we have more chance of approaching in an entirely inner action, or one considers goals as fundamentally contingent in relationship to intentions generative of values, or one considers goals as relative to a world, society, and relationships between things and persons about which there is no reason to think that they directly concern our possibilities of existence. More deeply, it is the feeling that the pursuit of these goals leaves parts of our being undeveloped and that it cannot save us.¹⁷

Again, we must remind ourselves that in this roundabout way we are forever seeking to know whether this life discloses the secret of existence or in another manner we always remain separated from our true being. Does man have a destiny? This

was the question Blondel sought to answer. Goals were the means by which the will sought satiety but never succeeded in the long run. Nabert points out that we should not be surprised by the disproportion between goals sought by the will and values which are displayed to us in action and which affect man. With Blondel we saw how the will sought goals because these goals were deemed to be valuable because in them salvation might be had. The disproportion between goals and values was really the disproportion between the willing will and the willed will. The values were a measure of infiniteness while the goals remained with the parameters of the finite. What we willed was more than what we got. Nabert suggests that "goals lack brilliance and ... can barely enter into the system of moral ends; values shine forth all the more, the lower goals are".

What one is is not measured by what one accomplishes. But does this mean that consciousness is indifferent to all goals which seem to be incompatible with certain values or value intentions? What is the relationship between goals and values? Could this correlation point to a deeper identity? Nabert suggests that when goals took root in the finality of the universe, then they became value. To put the matter differently, goals correspond to a moment when consciousness acquires a sense of direction and, as such, value is the evidence of an ascension of goals or may we say a hierarchy of goals. Blondel, we may recall, had not made the

distinction clear between goals and values insofar as they were discernible in a series of determinisms for which men live and die. Nabert helps us see that "between goals and values there is no true correlation, nor even less, tension or opposition, but rather identity considered from different points of view".¹⁷⁴ In a way that touches Blondel's view, Nabert writes that

If all the goals of the immanent order together truly give way in the face of a supreme goal, the will, which aims at this supreme goal in a pure movement of charity, will undoubtedly accomplish the goals of the immanent order. It will do so, however, in addition and as a task to which it gives itself, not because it recognizes in this task any intrinsic significance but because in the present life it will be the closest it can come to working symbolically for possession of what is uniquely necessary.¹⁷⁵

Value is the character of the goals which life assigns to itself. In this way they are the evidence of its ascending movement.¹⁷⁶ Value does not add to reality.¹⁷⁷ Value is "interior to beings which borrow from this finality the movement and the aspiration which animate them".¹⁷⁸ All of this indicates the direction that may be taken by an ethic that seeks its foundation "in the immanent spontaneity of the totality of the real".¹⁷⁹ The goals of an ethic are real in the sense of unfolding an aspiration that elevates nature. The desire to be of a real will are correlated with goals which are not predetermined in the structures of tendencies. In this way, goals give an irreducible quality to tendencies which makes it possible for them to share in an order which life did not contain. This indeed enunciates a value

intention. These goals which Nabert calls "cultural goals", whose object cannot be attained without submitting to rules, to internal necessities and so forth, make possible an ethic to be furnished with the "conditions of possibility of the highest forms of dedication of which man is capable".¹²⁰

The ascesis of inclination through goals not given in nature, that is, cultural goals, is simply, "the awakening of a possibility of existence for the self" and it "freed in the self a desire to be, a desire to be worthwhile, which was unknown to itself and henceforth reveals itself to itself as solidary with activities which interpret inclination as much as they add to it".¹²¹ Hence, the totality of cultural goals imply an ascesis of tendencies signaling the possibility of existence for the self.

The totality of the correlation between possibility of existence and cultural goals would still have to be recognized by an ethic even if there were no specifically moral goals. What is required by an ascesis through goals are interior acts and a linking of these acts and motives appropriate to the intrinsic quality of these goals, actions and tasks.¹⁰⁴ From this point of view it is instructive to see how Nabert views the failure of Kantian morality:

At the level of an ethic properly speaking, it is the profound feeling of this difficulty which led Kant, in his defiance but not condemnation of inclination, to require for a pure will an absolute goal which was nothing else but reason itself, considered as pure matter in the subjects in which it was incarnated. Reason already had a similar function from the point of view of the form determinative of action and decision. This establishment of reason as an absolute goal simply duplicated for the will, considered as a power of acting for goals, what was already for it the source of determination and value.¹⁰⁵

What this concludes for Nabert is that the correlation between the possibilities of existence of the self and goals is ruptured because the goals degenerate into technique hence, arousing perhaps a disillusionment with one's existence, or in Nabert's words, "having had to give up finding the raison d'être of its goals, or rather, having had to give up relating this raison d'être to its own desire to be, the self will dedicate itself to goals which its reason disavows".¹⁰⁶ But in order to give satisfaction "integrally to an aspiration" there is required an added ascesis which comes from the self itself.¹⁰⁷ It is here that there emerges a characteristic of an ethic because

this ethic "invites the self to choose itself" in order to insure that the goals of liberty are in accord with the highest possibilities of existence of the self.¹⁰⁰

What is at issue here is the aspiration of the total integrated self. The proportion between the level of goals and actions becomes legitimate by the solidarity that exists between goals and their value and this solidarity is what Nabert calls "the Sovereign Good in modern consciousness".¹⁰¹ Therefore it is important that the quality of goals and grandeur of causes not be indifferent to the desire to be worthwhile. Nabert maintains that "the concentration of possibilities of existence and, in measured degrees, this singular verification of desire in an action, task or duty is the most characteristic moment of the ascesis of choice which is superimposed on the ascesis of inclination through goals".¹⁰² Value is paid off by the correlation between the possibilities of existence of a self and a goal participating in an order which transcends the tendencies of nature. This correlation makes possible the verification of an aspiration. The question is now posed: does liberty have content adequate to the idea? In Nabert's opinion, the integration of tendencies, the ascesis of inclination through goals, the birth of possibilities of existence for the self and the renunciation of many of these possibilities which is required, or necessitated by the desire to be, make liberty a free liberty - it is a "liberty which realizes itself".¹⁰³

It is liberty, then, which realizes itself because it links itself to the history of a desire to be - this liberty in reality "witnesses to the pure subject".¹²⁰ But, it must be remembered, cultural goals and social goals do not satisfy the total self - in fact, Nabert says that they "make more acute the experience of the inequality of being with oneself and the need for a deeper communication between minds", and beyond the goals, which deepen the desire to be, the proper content of an ethic is the "totality of the possibilities of existence".¹²¹

Ethical Practice

Duty and Existence

Nabert, like Blondel, insists that desire must accept the exigencies of duty, at least, in order to preserve the quality of the aspiration. Duty does not satisfy our desire to be, says Nabert, but rather deepens our desire to be. This is in line with Blondel's contention that duty need not oppose freedom.¹²² However, obedience to duty at times engenders deception, hence provoking disgust with rules and regulations. At times, it is pleasure that restores the feeling of existence which duty freezes and ossifies when the constraints are too much to bear. It is a matter of course, therefore, that the misunderstanding of the relationship between duty and desire sets off a search for compensation. Needless to say, this compensation takes the form of

pleasure, an unsophisticated form of revenge against rules. But Nabert reminds us that communication is the safeguard against the temptations of subjectivity. But the restoration of a self to its true self occurs when we are on a "level of existence where it is no longer a question of what minds universally owe to one another in accordance with the moral law".¹¹² Nabert maintains that the "order of duty contributes to revealing to the self a desire to be whose deepening is identified with ethic itself".¹¹³ In Nabert's view, "the moral imperatives, the order of duty, in general, are a moment in this history whose significance it is incumbent upon an ethic to deduce and determine".¹¹⁴ If duty did not favor an expansion of this desire to be, the self would think that it had uncovered a contradiction between duty and aspiration. Nabert, therefore, proposes that,

In order for duty not to be a moment or a condition of the unfolding of our desire to be, it is necessary not only that the diversity of tendencies be unified in themselves but that from their unification a will be spontaneously born. However a will which would manifest itself through a certain concentration of tendencies would still be only the appearance of a will. The possibility of judging itself by considering itself as two wills would be lacking to this will.¹¹⁵

At this point Nabert reminds us that it is reason that is in the service of a desire "which no desire of our given being equals" and it is through duty that reason prepares an unfolding of desire. If the tendencies are left to themselves in their plurality or if they are strung

together in a single drive, they would engender dissatisfaction which, ultimately, would make "consciousness feel that it is on the road which does not lead to itself".¹⁹⁷ But these tendencies attain and also let slip away objects. These tendencies, it may be added, are dependent on a world which alternately stimulates and disappoints desire. Therefore, the fundamental desire to be inserts itself into tendencies and withdraws in favor of duty. It is this very withdrawal that allows the desire to be to find on another level the same tendencies. What happens, then, is that "these tendencies become docile to the realization of an aspiration through which, the self enters into possession of itself".¹⁹⁸ What takes place is that reason gets its own power from a desire which uses duty to oppose or suspend the natural tendencies. We can conclude here that reason is desire when it uses the law to restore the self against the natural tendencies. But it is not directly desire but merely the form that aspiration takes when it seeks through action a mirroring of being to itself - Nabert calls this an "aspiration to unity".¹⁹⁹ In a sense, therefore, duty disguises aspiration. As such, "an ethic includes all the moments of what ought to be called the involution of desire".²⁰⁰ But what does duty do? Nabert states that,

The nostalgia which duty helps to awaken in the soul is not the memory of lost unity but impatience rising out of obligation when obligation appears to delay the more delicate and deeper movements of love. The principle

moments of the history of desire are acts by which consciousness produces itself in instituting an order whose categories are strong enough to block the centrifugal forces which aggravate the inner dissension of tendencies and oppositions of individuals. Duty is one of these moments. It helps aspiration disentangle itself from the knot of natural tendencies. It prepares more substantial satisfactions for aspiration. But in neither its form nor its content can this aspiration be isolated from determinations which it receives from the fact of the givens to which it brings law and rule."

But a warning is issued that this aspiration cannot be isolated from the determinations of fault, failure, and solitude. In the same manner Nabert points out that

institutions themselves, at times, cannot help appear as a constraint; they do not put the tendencies at the service of the highest aspiration. The mission of institutions work for the "free accord" of pure inclination and natural inclinations. As we saw with duty, if the institution misunderstands the relationship it has with instincts, it provokes revenge from the instincts. The institution as mediator between nature and liberty recalls the problem of the relationship of life to morality and the problem of the relationship of reason to the self and to existence.

Therefore, just as the mediator between primary certitude and the multiplicity of minds, so too law and institution function as mediators, not opposing tendencies but, as Nabert says, "of interpreting them in the direction of the aspiration which they must serve and of transmitting them, thus regenerated, to consciousness". We may recall at this point that for Blondel duty was not merely an ought to

be; it is already that which it is because it is to be. In Blondel's configuration to truly will is to submit to duty. In short, heteronomy is not opposed to freedom; it enhances it. Nabert maintains that that institution succeeds, if it orients itself in the same direction as the tendency, and if this very tendency was fully-conscious of the finality it is to serve. This occurs if the tendency operates in agreement with the basic and central aspiration of the self, that is, with a willing that transcends all tendencies.²⁰⁰

What the tendency wants is not only "an integration of self but, beyond its passing desires, a kind of eternity which cannot be assured except through a renunciation by which it moves entirely to another level and consents to allow itself to be absorbed by an aspiration of another order".²⁰¹ The institution corrects the tendency only by allowing it to orient itself in the direction of its deepest desire. In Nabert's view, morality is narrow-minded when it does not see that duty is a necessary step in the history of the tendency to be. Nabert maintains that "it is a tendency which is identified with the history of consciousness, a history verifying and rediscovering at the same time the highest affirmation in a world dedicated to division and discord, which unceasingly regroup and increasingly must be limited and combated".²⁰² The bottom line is that "existence is the coming-to-be of this aspiration".²⁰³ Therefore Nabert sees duty as a moment of finality which

transcends all empirical finalities. We saw that for Blondel duty is not determined by deductive reasoning. It is the unfolding of the will that brings content to formal law. It is necessary to act, because moral intention, as it becomes embodied into ourselves through action, comes back to consciousness even more clearly. In this way Blondel believes that what is necessary in the obligation corresponds to the sincerity of the primitive willing. There is no question of opposing freedom and obligation. Blondel maintains that true autonomy is really heteronomy. Here Nahert writes:

What is common to duty and the desire to be is that both are largely independent of all matter and all content and do not have at all the same relationship with the world as tendencies and finalities whose success can be determined. In this, duty already brings us closer to our being. Liberty which acts under the law frees us and, what is even better, gives us access to a liberty which is no longer distinguished from our essence. As long as the desire which constitutes us is identified with empirical tendencies or is so close to them that it is not able to distinguish itself from them, it expects from the world satisfactions which will soon disappoint it. It follows from this that liberty defines itself as a power capable of wresting itself free of the solicitations of inclination. It also follows that liberty allies itself with duty and sets up an opposition between duty and the good. But duty throws light on and restores for itself an aspiration which inclinations masked. Our intimate willing is then liberty, and liberty coincides with essence. Its good is beyond all goods envisaged by finalities solidary with nature and the world."

We are reminded that there is a sharp opposition that exists between an ethic of intention and an ethic of consequence when it is abstract and detached from existence. But in the totality of action and existence in the concrete such an opposition is unified. Likewise does the opposition emerge

when it is related to different moments of the expansion of desire. But again, duty is the aid of the desire to be.

Neither duty nor responsible acts that accompany duty have the strength and power to defeat the natural inclinations if this inclination, ignorant of the self, did not serve an aspiration which expresses a certitude of duty.²⁰⁰ In short, to betray duty is to betray this aspiration. Thus, duty remains the condition that makes possible the reconciliation of the self with itself.

When a conflict of duty arises, the effort of the subject to restore its unity by creative decisions only signals the true meaning of obligation which was hidden by the harmony of self and duty. Nabert believes that the conflict reveals to the self a desire and possibilities of existence which duty had repressed.²⁰¹

To be sure, the self has been victorious in gaining a "growth of its being" by becoming aware of an aspiration which forbids the self both to refuse duty and to take refuge in it.²¹⁰ The conflicts of duties arise when aspiration of the highest affirmation, signals to consciousness that the ground, in which its will is rooted, is exhausted.

Communication, the Other, and Unity

It is Nabert's contention that the promotion of morality through duty creates the conditions of possibility for the communication between minds. This communication

brings inclination into accord with the inner aspiration. The communication is animated by the aspiration and is sustained by the "will to veracity".²¹¹ We may say with Nabert that communication serves the promotion of existence, but what happens when two minds meet each other? Nabert writes:

The welcome given one consciousness by another consciousness does not involve any judgement of an earlier reality. It is the experience of a presence; this moment is an act whose spontaneous or premeditated modalities correspond to spontaneous or premeditated modalities of an appeal. Welcome and appeal enrich each other, develop and deepen in an experience whose allied moments they are, in a reciprocity which must not be compared with that conceived according to forms of theoretical thought. A consciousness nourished by this reciprocity cannot think itself nor pose itself for itself as a subject capable at will of abstracting itself from this relation or of offering itself to it. The appeals heard and the replies which send out new appeals constitute a single experience, in which acts are interdependent in such a way that no one of them accedes to its own causality or to its own interiority except through the other to which it responds or whose response it detects.²¹²

When consciousness has constituted the idea of self there arises the problem of how to relate separate minds each for itself and unto itself. Nabert believes that the self constructs the idea that there is a secret of the inner life and in this regard the self is free to hide or unveil this secret at will. The possibilities of existence constituted around these acts, that is, silence, confession, and lie, are decisive moments. These possibilities appear to exist prior to communication. Thus communication disappoints and stimulates the desire for unity of minds. In this way, communication gathers together the forms of spontaneous

communication of minds to serve the promotion of existence.

Here Nabert emphasizes that "the distinction between an I ... and a self which, thanks to the I, thinks about and judges itself, far from being of the same order as the relationship of subject and object, can be constituted only by the interruption of a dialogue which minds carry on

without".²¹² Consciousness takes on an I in order to assume the function fulfilled by another consciousness. This results in a vacuum and a disappointment which is why the welcome that is given by another consciousness does not involve any prejudgements - "it is the experience of presence".²¹⁴

We may say that the most decisive act is when a consciousness discovers that its most secret and most free act opens up the hope for a liberty. In this manner consciousness renounces the illusion of being for itself. In the final analysis conversion to the affirmation of other minds "peoples the world with existences which constitute a universe always menaced with destruction".²¹⁵ But how is this unity to be understood?

Nabert insists that one goes to the heart of the matter if the problem is posed "in relationship to the experience of an absolute presence".²¹⁶ This experience is unique because it is not subject to the conditions from which communication between minds begins and develops. Nabert states that,

Communication translates into becoming and into effort what relationship to the highest certitude affirms in the

timelessness of its act. Everything issues from the primacy of a unitive experience through which each consciousness understands, subsequently, in the idea of self both the being it owes to the act of the other as well as the act by which it gives being to another. What the other consciousness is in me in communication, the being which it acquires through me and, reciprocally, the transformation of my own being by the act of the other consciousness - all issue from this unitive experience.²¹⁷

Hence, communication is rooted in the affirmation of unity.

The importance of this affirmation as remembered is

highlighted by Nabert in this manner:

... beneath refusal, beneath resistance, beneath hostility itself there hides a secret hesitation between love and hate, an oscillation between the one and the other in which there remains, along with the possibility of self-giving, the memory of a unitive experience without which there would not have been formulated at the same time as consciousness of self the act of refusal or negation of the other".²¹⁸

Nabert insists at this point that "the elan toward the One would be a sterile elan if it were not wholly transmuted into the desire to have the communication of minds serve the promotion of existence".²¹⁹ To be sure, consciousness could not possibly want to remain fixed within the affirmation of unity. Only by the inner act whereby the self recaptures the highest certitude and does not conspire with the unitive experience, does this world not fall into division. What allies our unitive experiences are the objectifications of subjects. The experience of our unitive experience is replaced, then, by the certitude of unity which, by transcending our unitive experiences introduces into our "incomplete history" something beyond history.²²⁰

There is, of course, a difference between a person who enters communication in another person by defining himself by rational autonomy and one who comes to himself animated by unitive aspiration. Consciousness realizes, sure enough, how autonomy itself impoverishes the person. In Blondel's view autonomy is problematic in the context of that supreme communication - love. Here we may quote him on this score:

The tenderness and devotion that a solitary egoism is incapable of providing for itself, is willed and achieved by the love of one for the other - an egoism-for-two, all the more delicate and rewarding because it loses sight of itself and imagines it is quite the opposite of what it is. To be sure, if one went to the bottom of all this obliging attention, solicitude, and generosity of mutual affection, if, starting from the acts, following the tenuous thread of involuted rationalizations, one went back to the principle of the unseen sentiments, one would be surprised, as most moralists have been, at the disguised self-love that is at play under a surface of goodness and abnegation. Thus, when we weep over a separation, it is over ourselves that we weep. But selflove sees better still than the moralists. It suspects that true affection felt for another brings more satisfaction than an egoism too much in a hurry to enjoy itself. Since the end knowingly sought does not exhaust the desire, since action ordinarily surpasses any definite intention, it follows that the profound causes of an act and even its effects may seem to fall under the law of self-interest, even though the agent himself may not be self-interested.⁴¹

In another manner consciousness is enriched when it openly confronts opposed beliefs. The guarantee of the truth of one's being is not assured when the self remains alone with itself. In Nabert's scheme we notice that there is the recognition of the basic characteristics of an ethic: at the bottom there is a "moral rationalism" which is favorable to the juridical conception of the relations between persons and

at the top there is a "mysticism of the One" where the distinction between persons collapses.²²⁰ The abolishment of the distinction of persons was made in order to protect oneself against the pretensions of self-autonomy. Once friendship, love and confession, as modes of communication, lend themselves to this insight new possibilities open up on the horizon.

It is important to note that the actualization of the self with itself makes it possible for the communication with others to respond to his most secret desire and consequently there arises the liberation of the self. Blondel had insisted over and over on the necessity of heteronomy at the service of true identity. Autonomy is secured with the latch of heteronomy just as freedom is constituted by determinism. The certitude and affirmation of unity allows the self to dissolve the ties that bind him to the world and other minds. At this point, what is ready to take place is the self's conversion to the One. Nabert points out that, every level of communication, corresponds to determining the answer to the questions: "who am I, I who answer? Who am I, I who interrogate?"²²¹

Virtues

Nabert points out that outside our aspirations we know nothing of our being except that "the being which we are through our actions is not equal to the being which we aim at

through them".²²² The distance between the 'I am' that grounds our aspiration and the 'I am' of our actions is always renewed. The distance between the volonté voulue and the volonté voulante is renewed at every new level of the series of determinisms. While for Blondel this distance is strengthened by any absolutizing of any phenomenon, in Nabert's view, this feeling of tension is also fortified by "the idea of a self which would preserve in some manner the values of our individual actions". How can man rectify this never-ending severance from himself? How can he recover a lost self, forever in search of itself in the tangle web of phenomena. Nabert writes:

The totalization of our intensions escapes us and has to escape us as long as we do not return to an esse more fundamental than the operari. It is quite true that our actions seem to us to come from an esse, but this is because of their opaqueness and because of their link to both docile and intransigent inclinations which resist our aspiration. A contrast, which awakens the hope of once again possessing oneself, is recreated between the promise of absolute renewal implied in a decision and the trace of our actions in memory because of the hardening which they undergo. Within this hope, or rather becoming one with it, the unconditionality of our certitude is affirmed. The esse which would correspond to this hope would be completely self-transparent operari. It is the antithesis of the esse in which our past and our nature would contract and to which our qualities would cling. Between one esse and the other esse, duty is available to us. The antithesis is found there in the guise of a tension which is existence itself.²²³

It is true that duty and the act of being are subordinated to an 'I am' on which they depend. As a habit of morality, the idea of virtue corresponds to a hope for liberation. Nabert writes:

Each virtue specifies this hope in its relationship to temporal multiplicity, to the discontinuity of acts as well as to desire which arise from the inclinations of nature. The relationship of esse to operari here presents itself in the idea of continuity. The assimilation of virtue to a habit considered as a bond between the plurality of separated actions tends to make of continuity the character of a lasting disposition of the individual who preserves and consolidates morality in intervals when it is not in action. Progress in morality becomes allied to force of habit instead of being sought in the increased demand for purity in intention and motivation.

Nabert tells us that, when for example, we meditate on Socrates, Jesus, and others, it is a spiritual form from which we sense and what we seek. We are incited to discover a "hidden unity" which expresses itself both in religious intuition or in a system of virtues. In this way, neither virtues, together or in isolation, have their full meaning, either in a doctrine or in a person, apart from a spiritual form which is inspired, in turn, by an idea or by a certitude dominating the whole of an ethic. Nabert believes that it is only on this condition can there be a morality. Therefore, in order for consciousness to be, there necessitates the verification that the highest certitudes influence virtues and duties. These virtues and duties adds to the act where the certitude finds its most authentic expression; it is the idea of this act that gives virtues and duties their value. From Nabert's point of view, the affirmation is mediated by the spiritual forms. Indeed, the coordination of virtues and duties is grounded on their common subordination to the primary affirmation. What happens

at this point is that the tendencies become transparent to the self, such that consciousness has moved beyond pleasure and suffering. In other words, there occurs self-regeneration. Nabert has this to say:

The promotion of values is real only if it is accompanied by the correlative creation of spiritual forms which become for consciousness the norm of its judgements and its affirmations. In this way the idea which is at the center of all these analyses is verified. It is indeed on a single and identical act that depend, correlatively, the value inscribed in individual actions and the virtue which appropriates them.²²

But how is self-regeneration brought about? Nabert writes:

The very fact of being, related by consciousness to the primary affirmation, is sufficient to arouse in the self the feeling of an inequality with itself. Because of this, the act by which consciousness reconstitutes its empirical memories and the orientation it gives to this reconstitution are for it the means not only of again having the experience of this inequality but also of becoming reconciled with it, of reconstituting the integrity of its inner being, of summoning up its hope. The self makes the act by which it appropriates the memories in this manner into the support for intensifying the certitude of a single origin for all decisions in which it has understood the constitutive law of its being. When, finally, the self is no longer permitted any real action, and when it must resign itself to making its new hold on its empirical memories the instrument of self-possession through entirely internal acts, the interchange in which the self engages with itself allows it to form and encourage hope, a hope fused with the assurance of a growing victory obtained over the initial opacity of its empirical being.²³

The hermeneutical method of ethics now begins to emerge in Nabert. The method is inseparable from the truth of its becoming. It is the business of reflection to grasp the affirmation of being worthwhile which is transcendent to all empirical orders possessed in memory. Of this Nabert writes:

The attention of consciousness to its past becomes

the act by which it regrips at a new level the certitude which directed all its effort. Dispensed from spreading, its action in the world, freed through it from all that is invincibly troubling in action itself, consciousness can bring to its memories the self-attention their realization requires. These memories lie before consciousness like a text to which one must find the key and the interpretation if consciousness wants to obtain the degree of serenity which can be attained by a being which has not been able to attain full realization but which can subsequently retrace the route which this realization has taken. It can discern the necessities mixed in with the purest resolutions and have this free appropriation of the past become, to a greater degree than was possible before, the instrument of the primary affirmation. While thus interrogating its past, consciousness not only stands in opposition to that movement and that natural bent of thought which catalogues all that is accomplished as determinism. On the contrary, consciousness also assumes responsibility for self, so that the actions by which it has truly added something to the primitive nucleus of its nature, and this nature itself, become quasi-indiscernible to an attentive pure consciousness of self. As far back as the self goes in the perspective opened on its past, it sees itself incapable of sorting out clearly in its actions what expresses the unconditional demand by which it is inspired and what translates the very foundation of the being which it did not create. However, in its refusal to separate, in its becoming, what belongs to nature and what belongs to its liberty, the self verifies once again its desire to be worthwhile. The self employs its empirical memories to grasp in them, through reflection, an affirmation which transcends all of them.

In addition to this we are reminded that consciousness must compensate the feeling of fault which is born from the very fact of still being alive. But does consciousness have a guarantee of its affirmation that is sufficient? Is there a faith or belief which goes beyond the givens? Nabert tells us that the identity of our inner being and the supreme principle authorizes us, the actuality of what can only be hope. Nabert writes that "the desire which arouses the real unfolding of existence is the desire to reabsorb through

action itself what is the very condition of action and without which action would have no meaning".²²⁹ There is nothing more Blondellian in Nabert's work than that very sentence which displays the summation of L'Action

In what way does the powerlessness of the will arouse a transcending reflection? Of course, in Blondel, the hypothesis of the 'unique necessary' emerges once reflection takes hold of the whole series of determinisms that had laid out before the infinite exigency. Blondel suggests that the hope of salvation lies within man's reach and he can be victorious only by submitting his will to this 'unique necessary', not in idea but in the concrete practice which alone resolves the destiny of man. Nabert is more cautious. He does state that 'nothing authorizes us to conclude, from our powerlessness, the impossibility of this victory which is for us only an idea, that is, an infinite exigency'.²³⁰

It is by veneration that we have the means of restoring the feeling of our inequality with ourselves and, as Nabert puts it, we become "the witnesses.... of moral sublimity".²⁰¹ But it is in ourselves that we find the sources of the feeling of moral sublimity and there is, we may add, a need to participate in the source itself because this very identity transfers into a desire in order to reduce through action the gap between "our given being and our absolute being". But Nabert points out that moral sublimity is only accessible to those who have already experienced, by way of effort, different moments of the realization of the desire to be; it readily prepares one for moral sublimity. It may also be said that the categories of moral sublimity have been set forth throughout history by creative action, that is, the idea of holiness, heroism, wisdom etc.... Yet there is a great distance between the wisdom of Socrates or the holiness of St. Francis of Assisi. What attracts us to a "divine model", suggests Nabert, is the unity of doctrine and act. Nabert puts the matter thus:

When absolute actions imply willingness to lose one's life, they arouse our highest veneration. The feeling of moral sublimity which takes hold of us is concentrated on beings in which it appears that the spontaneity of instincts is radically reversed in favor of a consciousness which has equaled itself by acceptance of sacrifice. The supreme guarantee of a belief, the identity, finally verified, between the act interior to thought and a real action, the concentration of will in an act which consumes all the energy of a being, a victory over death won by death itself; it is all this that calls forth our veneration by reminding us of the truth of our own being, arousing in us both humility and the feeling of participation in a dignity which

infinitely transcends us. We cannot refuse affirmation of these absolute actions nor close ourselves to their sublimity without at once feeling our self-attention weaken and relax. It is incumbent upon us then not only to save these actions from oblivion but to free them unreservedly from all relativity to conditions which would betray the act from which they issue. As soon as we begin to attribute to nature and to consciousness what belongs to each, we forbid ourselves the possibility of the humblest act. It is not by diminishing determinism that one raises oneself to these absolute actions; it is by resolutely posing them as transcendent to all explanation. The unconditionality of what is for us idea, that is, infinite exigency, authorizes us to do it and to judge our advance in existence by these actions. The same act by which we refuse for ourselves any pretension to be equal to what primary certitude requires of us envelops the legitimacy of our affirmation of absolute actions and guarantees the value of the feeling of sublimity which we first of all experience. These actions testify to the identity of an inner act and a concrete action which absorbs nature into itself, one might say, while depending on it.²⁰³

Nabert insists that veneration propagates "the meaning of the decisive moments in which history is one with doctrine and act with idea".²⁰⁴ One becomes worthwhile by appropriating the content of what is known by consciousness through veneration. This is because possibilities of existence are created by veneration. Veneration, I may add, intensifies our desire to be. We regain something that we ~~felt~~ was missing. It nourishes and inspires, and, as Nabert says, "It gives us access to an existence which owes its being neither to life nor to effort".²⁰⁵ We discover, then, because of it, a being, behind the alienated man, which is touched neither by "unfulfillment of his work nor by limitations of any order which impose the laws of life on his activity".²⁰⁶ But what kind of being does Nabert refer to?

Nabert answers:

It is a being which brings the experience of a certitude which transcends history to bear on the interruption of its history. Undoubtedly, this experience annexes to itself the immanent eternity of intelligence which understands but it is not identical with it. Only an act of reflection is necessary for the operation of thought to be duplicated in a consciousness of the eternal. But this reflection, renewable identically in every instant, is not susceptible of enrichment. In truth, it is a stranger to the effort of the inner being to be equal to itself. This reflection is without link with death, absence, or separation. Pretending to consider indifferently all that concerns only the self, it moves about on the level of an always actual correlation between time and the eternal which involves in no way the concrete decisions of consciousness and the real acceptance of loss. All that is necessary to raise oneself to the idea of the experience or the eternity of thought is a reflective grasping of the intellectual act. It is an element, but not the only element, of a deeper experience which gives us access to our true being, to a being which would remain hidden from us as long as we did not succeed in integrating death in our own history and in tearing it away from the natural course of our life. We then experience a regeneration which knows itself exposed to a rhythm of weakness and exaltation but which draws on this tension for a certitude surer of itself. This serenity is the substitute for eternity; it is all the eternity conceivable for a consciousness endeavoring to be equal to itself. This consciousness is able to do only by borrowing the forces of the individual and by the verifications which it effects and which are for it the symbols of an impossible adequation. This serenity shines on life itself. It creates the sweetness and depth of life. Serenity is the foretaste of what must rigorously remain unverifiable.

A Comparative Summary

It may be necessary at this point to summarize the long excursion into Nabert's very dense and difficult thought in order to recapitulate its essential features which may compare with some of the elements that can be extrapolated from Blondel's work.

We may note that Elements for an Ethic constitutes the best example of the reflective method in which the very principle of his philosophy is self-affirmation. His starting point is not an a priori metaphysic, nor pure intuition but rather fundamental and concrete experiences which demands that reflection deepens by revealing its meaning. This is to permit consciousness to recapture itself. Nabert, we recall, started with the negative experiences of fault, failure and solitude because these fundamental characteristics of human experience, tied to our finitude signify less an limitation in the order of human knowing than an unconscious presence of non-being against which consciousness must battle in order to come to itself. By reflecting on these experiences, which really ground the very need to reflect, the reflecting self will be able to put itself back in possession of its real being which always aspires towards itself in its very being. But Blondel's L'Action is also a reflection on the itinerary of consciousness in the form of a will always trying to complete itself. The inadequation of a willed will and a willing will is that which makes possible a need that seeks meaning. This need to discern behind all phenomena a principle that makes possible a self-appropriation which allows the possibility of the being to possess its 'becoming'. In both cases the method of ethics consists in reflecting on the history of our desire to be or the history of our becoming. Both attempt to find behind the signs or

expressions of this aspiration the meaning of that willing and the significance of that itinerary of consciousness. Both agree that the true being can only be attained with the help of mediation. Self-abnegation and sacrifice are the operations by which this can be accomplished. Reflection ultimately leads to a certitude of being because such a certitude is grounded in an originary affirmation of pure consciousness which is attested by action. From this original affirmation, then, Nabert shows an orientation towards finality is discernible in human tendencies. It is final causes that pull the aspiration. What is important to realize is that man is not to take himself as an end in himself, that he must consent to lose himself. In the same way, virtue must not be taken as an end.

Both in Nabert and in Blondel, universal reason, that is, as it is expressed as duty, obligation and, institution regain a role misunderstood by the existential tradition. It is this authority of reason or the will of the universe that allows man to master the anarchy of natural tendencies, not to oppose them. If the natural tendencies can be converted to higher ends, we can say that man responds to that desire to be more than he is, that is, a self-unified self. Again, institutions, the solidity of morals, are the mediating forms of action that stand between nature and freedom, whose goal does not contradict nature but delivers it and reveals to the self an aspiration of which it had been unaware. Blondel had

displayed that, behind the expansion of willing into all phenomena, there is revealed an aspiration of which the self is unaware. In Blondel this aspiration seeks the reality of the 'unique necessary'. But in Nabert this aspiration leads to the experience of the One in the communication between minds and, to achieve this, the mediation of the other is necessary. The sense of self is given by the other; but, again, this was also brought out by Blondel in the communication of love and friendship. But Nabert, we must remember, wonders whether this Unity of minds expresses also a relationship between minds and an absolute Consciousness which would guarantee the validity of their exchange. But this is a knowledge beyond human experience. This supreme confidence in an absolute Unity pushes away all references to categories of objects. It can be said that this supreme certitude of an absolute Unity can sustain a deeper interpretation, more and more in conformity with the exigencies of the spirit that it can take the form of an aspiration towards God. By showing how the primary certitude finds its affirmation in the examples of sublimity of which we are witnesses, Nabert evokes the role of mediator.

The sublimity of consciousness which is capable of absolute actions and which happens to be the concrete incarnation of the supreme principle sustains our veneration and redeems us. In this way we are led to the experience of serenity. This consciousness of serenity has integrated death to its own

life as it awaits the interruption of its history in order to experience a certitude that his own historical text has posed.²³⁹ In short both Blondel and Nabert profess the same exigency of purification, the same need for revelation and the necessity of interpreting and criticizing signs.²⁴⁰ In both cases, ethics becomes a hermeneutical concern because it reads a history of our desire to be. It hermeneutically seeks the meaning behind the text in which is written the narrative of the human spirit in the form of signs that are laid out in terms of a hierarchy of determinisms, as goals, that promote existence and the desire to be worthwhile. In a most basic way, therefore, ethics can only be a poetics of the will.

The Metaphysics of Moral and Religious Practice

Revelation and Action

Blondel insists that action is not completed in the natural order, yet the name of the "supernatural" is the scandal of reason. What can the philosopher do? Can he ignore such a hypothesis or deny it altogether? Blondel suggests that it is impossible for philosophy to ignore a truth or life higher than nature; to recognize a higher truth is the "work" of philosophy. The supposition of the supernatural is very real for Blondel. We have seen that his regressive analysis, up until now, has made us "conscious of an incurable disproportion between the plan of the will

and the human end of action".²⁴¹ Throughout the phenomenological inquiry, in attempting "to determine the dispositions for a completely good and logical will", there was always something understood, that the inquiry was "in correspondence with the secret movement of a consciousness which, going ahead of the slow pace of the investigation, already knows more than it pretends to know", suggesting that philosophical inquiry is also at the mercy of an immanent operation that guides the inquiry itself - the inquiry becomes conscious of an infinite a priori, or as Blondel suggests, "all is supernatural and nothing is, because in every act ... in every phenomenon, there subsists in what is known, an irreducible mystery".²⁴²

Blondel, we notice, points here to the problematic of philosophy as it comes face to face with revelation. Blondel maintains that "it is legitimate to push" philosophy to the point where we feel that we "should desire interiorly something analogous to what dogmas propose from the outside" and it is also legitimate to consider these dogmas, "not primarily as revealed, but as revealing; that is, to confront them with the profound exigencies of the will and discover in them, it is there, the image of our real needs and the awaited answer".²⁴³ Blondel also wonders whether is it not "the role of philosophy to straighten out the human will all the way by looking always in its action for what is truly in conformity to its primitive aims".²⁴⁴ Blondel is aware of

the antagonism that exists between philosophy and theology, that each wants its own autonomy. It is Blondel's view that "the fullness of philosophy consists, not in a presumptuous self-sufficiency, but in the study of its own powerlessness and of the means which are offered from elsewhere to supply for its powerlessness".²⁴² Therefore Blondel takes particular care to study the mechanism and genesis of dogma or a revealed precept.

Therefore, it is not in sensible signs that we must look for the origin of the idea of revelation. It was in the effort of the will to equal itself that the need was born for "an exterior correspondence and a necessary complement for our inner action".²⁴³ Revelation may be scandalous to one who thinks he is self-sufficient.²⁴⁴ Blondel insists that signs, coming from the outside, though necessary, are never sufficient because "it is the interpretation ... the interior need, that is everything".²⁴⁵ As for miracles, Blondel states that they are miraculous "only in the eyes of those already prepared to recognize divine action in the most habitual of events and acts".²⁴⁶ Against any extrincism Blondel argues that it is not from revelation itself, nor from natural phenomena that the idea of revealed precepts or dogmas can come - "it is from an interior initiative that this notion springs forth".²⁵⁰

What Blondel argues is that divine revelation itself must propose itself, that it must come forward; it must be

free of human initiative and this requires an act of submission. In fact, the supernatural movement cannot proceed from the human agent. Blondel insists that even the élan, the aspiration that has led to God has to be, in principle, a gift. Therefore revelation is given or received only through a mediator - this, for Blondel, is the first and essential exigency. The second and more essential exigency is that to refer everything back to God, to refer all life back to its source, we need a help, "an intercessor," a pontiff to be the act of our acts" and it is "by Him, alone that our will can equal itself to itself and hold on to everything in between, from its principle to its head".²⁵¹

In Blondel's view it is quite clear that, in order to satisfy a supreme exigency, man requires a help that does not come from man alone. Therefore, what revealed precepts accomplish is that, from the outside, it presents features and elements that correspond and are appropriate to the internal exigencies. But to be truly efficacious, the revealed doctrine must furnish its reasons; it has to be convincing. How, it may be asked, can man believe in what he does not understand, namely, dogmas and revealed precepts? How can man interiorize and make live, within him, a dogma? In Blondel's view, then, it is through action that revealed truth is able to penetrate a person without losing any supernatural integrity. This is because a thought that is lived gains meaning and value only to the extent that it is

practiced.

How can, indeed, divine assistance intervene into our life? By what opening does it enter, absolutely independent of our initiative? Through our thoughts, our acts? Blondel suggests that in this closed circle of the interior life, "there is no door prepared for the intrusion of a foreign operation".²⁵² In fact, Blondel states that "to reintegrate into willed operation all that is found at the principle itself of his voluntary aspiration", man must take "the decisive step of action" because "he needs a gift" and action is the "only receptacle that can contain it".²⁵³ What Blondel is suggesting here is that now man's action is impregnated by faith, by the fact that he now knows that behind all action there is supernatural life. Where man once knew divine truth, now must possess it.²⁵⁴ But Blondel insists that this supernatural gift be posited as an hypothesis.²⁵⁵

At this point we may ask: if practice arrived at faith, can faith arrive at practice? The dilemma can be posed in this manner: if acts begin without faith and ends up with a belief, is this belief a state of rest where it is simply enough "to adore in spirit and in truth", excluding literal practice? Or, if this faith is a gift, "in what way could the transcendent and incomprehensible dogma inspire acts capable of expressing it without denaturing it", or better still, "how could it enclose itself in the letter of a

symbol, a rite, or a sacrament without changing the purity of the interior sense into idolatry"?²⁵⁰ Blondel writes this:

... c'est ... par la pratique que la foi se developpe et se purifie, comme c'est la foi qui inspire et transfigure toute la vie pratique de l'homme. De la lettre à l'esprit, du dogme au précepte, il y a un échange perpétuel et une intime solidarité. La lettre c'est l'esprit en action. Et, si les mystères semblent des vérités purement spéculatives, il naît cependant par la réunion d'un mystère à l'autre des unités toutes pratiques. Les dogmes non seulement sont des faits et des idées en actes, mais encore ce sont des principes d'action.²⁵¹

It is for this reason, then, that Blondel will, next, examine the value of literal practice and the meaning of acts that are required by precept.

Faith in Action

We have seen how the complete natural development of the human will arrives at the avowal and felt need for a "truth higher than reason".²⁵⁰ But it is unacceptable that this faith become the principle behind acts that are embodied in nature or that this divine intervention descend into the detail of practical life through sensible signs or that supernatural life should have a natural expression. What Blondel argues against is the belief that beneath the determinisms of dogmas, rites, and practices, the transcendent is immanent "without losing anything of its infinity".²⁵² In Blondel's estimate, this is sheer idolatry and superstition. Blondel insists that "the way of adoring in spirit and in truth is to rise to a literal faithfulness and a practical submission" and "if the spirit demands and

evokes the letter, the true letter inspires and vivifies the spirit".²⁴⁰ It is at this point that we see Blondel lamenting that philosophy has too often abandoned its rightful duty, namely, its most ethical question: "how to make the willed end equal to the very principle of the voluntary aspiration".²⁴¹ What is at issue here is to see how the notion of the supernatural is necessarily engendered, in other words, how the supernatural seems necessary in order for the human will to "reach its equation in consciousness".²⁴² This does not mean that one has to determine the contents of Divine Revelation, because, if revelation is to be what it is, it must transcend the grasp of reason - it is essentially impenetrable.²⁴³

In Blondel's view, all that is necessary for philosophy is "to establish that, fully consequent with our secret wish, we go all the way to literal practice; it is to express the inevitable exigencies of thought and as it were the natural prayer of the human will".²⁴⁴ Therefore, "that the act of faith should inspire faith in acts is ... the intolerable paradox".²⁴⁵ While the content of faith may be incomprehensible, we may say that action gives it a meaning. Thus, the efficacy of literal practice is rendered its full value when the whole of man is possessed by action. In short, faith is embodied.²⁴⁶ Blondel insists on the corporality of literal practice because there has to be a conclusion and what this entails is action because "action broadens thought

out" and "it is in acts alone that God ... can gain a foothold within us".²⁶⁷ Blondel's thought is difficult to grasp at this point, but what he is getting at is that the man of action is no longer able to say 'I have faith', but rather, through the literal practice he is saying 'I am faith'. Clearly, the act of faith is not merely a belief but an act of the will. This removes any accusation that faith is an outcome of psychological faculties.²⁶⁸

Blondel maintains that "by the profound movement of his freedom man is led to will to ally himself with God and to form one synthesis with Him".²⁶⁹ Therefore, "every act tends to become a communion" whereby "this synthesis could not be consummated except by action".²⁷⁰ In turn faith is a principle of action, "the divine experience within us", says Blondel, "that helps man produce the belief he lives by".²⁷¹ Here Blondel is at great pains to show the necessity of the embodiment of faith in action in order for "the slow work of transubstantiation and conversion" to take place in our "carnal mass, in our desires and in our appetites".²⁷² Blondel, therefore, maintains that action is pregnant with the universal life, not just in terms of the individual but also in terms of the great social body. Blondel writes,

Il faut donc, pour entretenir la circulation et l'unité dans la cité des âmes, pour rythmer la respiration de la vie universelle en nous, qu'il y ait coopération et édification. Edification, le beau mot: il ne suffit jamais d'agir pour soi, on ne le peut pas; il faut bâtir en autrui, se rendre partie de l'oeuvre totale et

s'approprier à l'édifice. Si, par l'action, chacun trouve accès en soi jusqu'aux sources secrètes d'où procèdent les sentiments et les croyances, par elle aussi chacun trouve en autrui le secret des pensées et des aspirations communes. C'est grâce à cette union pratique que les hommes, faisant surgir d'un fond qu'ils ignorent eux-mêmes leurs certitudes et leurs affections, s'attachent les uns aux autres par un lien si puissant et si doux qu'ils ne forment qu'un même esprit et un même corps. Oui, la pratique opère seule ce prodige de former, avec la diversité des esprits, un corps unique, parce qu'elle emploie et façonne ce par quoi ils tiennent les uns aux autres. Voilà pourquoi il n'y a d'unité doctrinale qu'en suite d'une discipline commune et d'une conformité de vie. Et voilà pourquoi les dogmes et les croyances ne sont des enseignements pour la pensée qu'en vue de devenir des principes d'action. C'est jusque-là qu'il faut aller pour comprendre que l'union intellectuelle demeure impossible parmi les hommes, qui pourtant ont besoin d'elle et qui ont besoin qu'elle soit libre et totale, impossible aussi longtemps qu'elle prétend rester indépendante de la discipline et de la tradition; car la tradition et la discipline représentent l'interprétation constante de la pensée par les actes, offrant à chacun, dans l'expérience consacrée, comme un contrôle anticipé, un commentaire autorisé, une vérification impersonnelle de la vérité que c'est à chacun de ressusciter en soi pour prendre place dans l'assemblée des intelligences.²⁷³

Therefore in order to deal with the totality we need a literal practice. Two things are at work in action that arises from faith. Blondel explains:

C'est par l'action que le divin tient en l'homme, y cache sa présence, y insinue une pensée et une vie nouvelles. C'est par l'action que les parties infirmes et obscures qui expriment les besoins de l'organisme et le retentissement de l'univers s'élèvent à la foi et coopèrent à l'oeuvre humaine et divine qui s'accomplit en nous. Sans elle la synthèse ne se parfait point. Pour que tout le corps soit éclairé, il faut que l'oeil soit lumineux; pour que l'oeil soit lumineux, il faut que le corps soit actif et sain.²⁷⁴

In order that practice not be reduced to "an idolatrous fiction" or to "equal the faith", it is necessary that ritual acts be "the expression of positive precepts and the original

imitation of dogma divinely transcribed into distinct commandments".²⁷⁵ Ritual acts must not be "vehicles of the transcendent" but have "to contain its real presence and be its immanent truth".²⁷⁶ Therefore practice is necessary but unless it is given as a supernatural order it is merely superstition.

It becomes apparent therefore, in Blondel's view that the positive precept must contain a will other than man's since, by definition, the letter of the dogma is divine thought incarnate in a sensible sign. The human will is equal to itself if it consents itself to the other.²⁷⁷ Therefore Blondel insists that "in literal practice ... the human act is identical with the divine act".²⁷⁸ From this Blondel is able to conclude that practice is perfect conformity with the exigencies of freedom. In addition, Blondel maintains that the supernatural gift is gratuitous. It is not within our comprehension. Blondel explains:

D'un mot, il y a un infini présent à tous nos actes volontaires, et cet infini nous ne pouvons par nous-mêmes le tenir dans notre réflexion ni le reproduire par notre effort humain. Pour le saisir et le produire comme nous le voulons, il faut donc que ce principe secret de toute action se livre à nous, la forme même par laquelle nous pouvons entrer en communion avec lui, le recevoir et le posséder dans notre petitesse. Il nous faut l'infini fini; et ce n'est pas à nous de le limiter; sinon, nous le rabaîsserions à notre taille; c'est à lui seul de se mettre à notre portée et de condescendre à notre exiguité pour nous exalter et nous élargir à son immensité. Encore une fois, la réalité de ce don reste, il est vrai, hors de l'homme et de la philosophie; mais c'est l'oeuvre essentielle de la raison d'en voir la nécessité, et de déterminer les convenances naturelles qui régissent l'enchaînement des vérités surnaturelles elles-mêmes. Si les actes symboliques qui ont pour objet

de réaliser dans l'homme la vie parfaite et de mettre la volonté en équation avec elle-même dans la conscience venaient de l'homme seul, ils ne sauraient être que téméraires et superstitieux. Et voilà pourquoi nous sommes toujours tentés de nous étonner et presque de nous scandaliser à la vue d'un signe contingent qui prétend exprimer la réalité nécessaire, d'un acte relatif et transitif qui se donne pour absolu, de quelque chose qui doit contenir tout. Il vaudrait mieux, semble-t-il, que ce ne fut rien d'apparent. Mais, si le précepte vient, ainsi que la raison même l'exige, d'une source autre que la volonté de l'homme, alors l'étonnement doit cesser: l'infinie grandeur peut s'accommoder à notre infinie petitesse; le divin est plus qu'universel, il est particulier à chaque point entier en chacun; s'il se donne à tous comme la manne qui avait tous les goûts, c'est sous la forme la plus accessible et la plus humble, parce que cette dégradation sublime sa bonté et sa dignité exige qu'il ne nous condescende pas à demi.²⁷⁹

Blondel, therefore, maintains that in religious practice, the relations between thought and action must be preserved, completed, and reversed because belief, in order to be sincere, has to manifest itself through practical works and it is in the positive precept²⁸⁰ that there is a perfect equation between spirit and the letter. Blondel also maintains that, unlike habits where thought precedes action, the sensible sign "contains the light whose invisible center thought seeks to discover little by little".²⁸⁰ While it is heterogenous to us, practice and dogma are in themselves identical whose role is to "bring to thought and to the will the unity of the ideal and the real" and to reintegrate into man "the integrity of the cause that creates him and vivifies him, a restoration which is possible only if the human will ... assimilates itself to the end conceived and willed as the term of our destiny."²⁸¹ The true letter, indeed, is the

very reality of the spirit.

Blondel maintains that we give ourselves birth by giving God birth in us:

Pour suivre jusqu'au bout le déterminisme des exigences de l'action humaine et la chaîne des relations nécessaires à l'achèvement de notre destinée, il faut donc que Dieu s'offre à nous comme anéanti, afin que nous rendions à cet apparent néant sa plénitude.... C'était la grande tentation de devenir comme des dieux ; rêve impossible. Et pourtant il semble donne à l'homme d'opérer un plus merveilleux prodige: pour être, nous devons, nous pouvons faire que Dieu soit pour nous et par nous.... et ne faudra-t-il pas en effet l'éternité pour que l'homme puisse recevoir et absorber Dieu, ce Dieu que, pour être et pour vivre pleinement, l'homme a besoin de produire et de vouloir, comme il est connu et voulu de lui? Il ne nous appartient pas de satisfaire à ces exigences: il nous appartient de constater la capacité du vide préparé en nous.²⁸²

Once again, Blondel insists on the truth of action and gives it its true measure when he says that,

Le véritable infini est moins dans la connaissance que dans la vie; il n'est ni dans les faits, ni dans les sentiments, ni dans les idées, il est dans l'action. Les apparentes étroitures de la pratique sont immensément plus amples que la prétendue largeur de la spéculation ou que tout le mysticisme du coeur. L'esprit sans la lettre n'est plus l'esprit. La vérité ne vit point dans la forme abstraite et universelle de la pensée: le seul commentaire qui la laisse intacte, c'est la pratique qui renouvelle, en chaque intelligence, le mystère de sa conception et la met toute en chacune avec la richesse de ses aspects contraires. Le ciel est, de science certaine, sous nos pas aussi bien que sur nos têtes: mais comme nous ne marchons encore et ne vivons que sur la terre, c'est dans la terre à terre de l'acte qu'il faut, malgré l'obstacle, voir le ciel étendu au-delà. C'est à la lettre qu'il faut prendre la lettre, parce qu'en elle seule, et non dans l'interprétation qu'on en donnerait, se cache la réalité de l'opération qu'elle prescrit. La lettre n'est point d'abord pensée, elle est surtout pratique; et s'il y a, dans son obscurité même, des paroles claires et pénétrantes comme un regard aimant, c'est à la condition qu'elles restent décisives et tranchantes comme le glaive de l'action.²⁸³

At this point it is always best to let the master speak

himself, thus, in summary, this is how Blondel ended his thesis:

Ainsi se révèle peu à peu l'ambition intégrale de la volonté qui se cherchait elle-même sans se connaître d'abord tout entière. C'est en prétendant s'égaliser effectivement à sa propre puissance qu'elle cesse de trouver sa suffisance en elle seule. Nous voulions, semble-t-il, tout faire de nous-mêmes; et voici que, par ce dessein, nous sommes amenés à reconnaître que nous ne faisons rien, et que Dieu seul, agissant en nous, nous donne d'être et de faire ce que nous voulons. Quand donc nous voulons pleinement, c'est lui, c'est sa volonté que nous voulons. Nous demandons qu'il soit, qu'il soutienne, achève, reprenne en sous-oeuvre toutes nos opérations; nous ne sommes à nous que pour nous réclamer de lui et nous rendre à lui; notre vraie volonté, c'est de n'en avoir point d'autre que la sienne; et le triomphe de notre indépendance est dans notre soumission. Soumission et indépendance également réelles. Car ce que nous devons obtenir, c'est que notre vouloir se règle sur le sien, et non le sien sur le nôtre. Et lorsque, par cette libre substitution, nous reconnaissons qu'il fait tout en nous, mais par nous et avec nous, c'est alors qu'il nous donne d'avoir tout fait. Nous participons librement à sa nécessaire liberté; en acceptant qu'il soit en nous ce qu'il est en lui, nous gagnons d'être nous-mêmes ce qu'il est lui-même, Ens a se. Nous n'arrivons à l'indépendance que par l'abnégation, mais nous y devons arriver. Ce qui est impossible au regard de l'entendement et par le seul effort de la pensée devient une réalité dans la pratique; c'est elle qui associe, dans une parfaite synthèse, deux natures en apparence incompatibles. Seules, les volontés peuvent se marier ainsi, de manière à former, dans une coopération étroite, qu'une même chose, ut unum sint. Et c'est pour cela qu'à l'action seule il est attribué le pouvoir de manifester l'amour et d'acquérir Dieu.²⁹⁴

The Metaphysics of Action

The Ontological Solution

What Blondel has done up to now has been to set forth the conditions subordinate to action. What this means is that knowledge and the affirmation of being have been

considered as phenomenon. Therefore, what remains to be done is to discover being itself in the phenomena. What needs to be done here is justify all the exigencies of action. Instead of a regressive analysis, what occupies Blondel at this point is a teleological analysis.²⁸⁵ Thus the justification of phenomena is the ontological solution of the practical problem.

While religious practice seems to close the circle of human destiny, it is necessary to push out beyond this closed circle. This is to serve as justification for all the determinisms that have occurred. Blondel maintains that, rather than discard the rungs of the ladder that has brought man to the top of the ascension, it is necessary that "man completes his role by grounding absolutely the universal reality with which action has been nourished, that role which consists in becoming the real bond of things and conferring upon them all the being they entail".²⁸⁶ What Blondel seeks to present is the truth of the relations required by action. This is what he writes:

Comment se forme inévitablement en nous l'idée d'existence objective; comment nous affirmons invinciblement la réalité même des objets de notre connaissance; quel est précisément le sens nécessaire de cette existence objective; à quelles conditions cette réalité, forcément conçue et affirmée, est réelle en effet, ces questions ne font d'abord que continuer le mouvement du déterminisme pratique; elles semblent ne porter que sur les rapports internes qui rendent tous les phénomènes solidaires dans notre conscience; mais, au terme, ce seront ces phénomènes mêmes qui se trouveront constituer l'être des choses. La nécessité pratique de poser le problème ontologique nous amène nécessairement à la solution ontologique du problème pratique.²⁸⁷

It is easy to see here that Blondel has given consideration to what is indispensable and needed for the consummation of action. Now the problem is to show how action "consummates and constitutes" phenomena; thus, what expressed the need of the will now requires an absolute truth.²⁸⁸ At this point we notice that Blondel has undertaken a reversal of method:

Ce qui n'était encore que nécessité de fait sera fondé en raison. Ce qui n'avait été posé, en face de la pensée, que comme moyens immanents au vouloir va être posé, hors de la volonté, comme fins immanentes à la pensée. Et, tandis que l'action avait paru première, et l'être, dérivé, c'est la vérité, c'est l'être qui vont paraître premiers, mais sans que leur subsistance et leur nature même cessent d'être déterminées par l'action qui y trouve sa règle en même temps que sa sanction.²⁸⁹

It is this perspective that will define the "exact value" of the preceeding affirmations.²⁹⁰ We saw, for example, how metaphysics, with regards to the tiered forms of morality, had been invoked to confer a transcendental value on acts. At this point, Blondel even considered God only on a practical level, that is, only insofar as this conception forces us to affirm implicitly the living reality of God. What Blondel argues is that there was no question of concluding God's being from it. What Blondel had insisted on was that the "necessary idea of God" leads to the option.²⁹¹ When Blondel had spoken of the supernatural, revealed dogma or literal practice, it was still in terms of a natural need of the will - whether this higher order had been met or not was not considered. Now, at this point, when Blondel will have to

determine the idea necessarily engendered in us of a subsistent reality as well as affirm the being of objects of knowledge and the nature of this objective existence, it is to be considered only in regards to the inevitable sequence of the relations integrated in consciousness. What is important is that the renewed perspective is not to step out of the determinism of phenomena. What Blondel insists he is doing is showing how, by thinking and acting, "it is necessary to proceed as if this universal order were real and these obligations grounded".

The strength of science is to exclude the possibility of doubt, to admitting the truth which exists in us prior to being in science and which science attains only a posteriori; yet we live by the truth from the very beginning. But how is the idea of a subsistent reality engendered and organized? The problematic is stated at the outset by Blondel - it is impossible to arrive at the ontological problem before running through all the interlocking links of determinisms while it is also impossible not to arrive at it after having developed the whole of this determinism of action. What is needed is to determine the complete system of relations between the two extremes. Blondel, therefore, maintains that "from the voluntary to the willed, from the ideal conceived to the real performed, from the efficient cause to the final cause, all the intermediaries must be passed through before we have the

right to turn back and see, in the fleeting succession of the phenomena, the very solidity of being".²⁹³

Once thought has embraced the whole of these successive and passing operations that make the final cause immanent to the efficient cause "thought must necessarily make the entire series of its objects enter into the reality of the end that was already present from the very beginning".²⁹⁴ There is a double consequence that comes out of this. Blondel explains:

Puisque l'inévitable déterminisme de l'action, enveloppant toute la suite des moyens nécessaires, nous amène forcément à ce terme, il en résulte qu'il y a en nous une connaissance certaine de l'être, à laquelle nous ne pouvons nous dérober; et même cette connaissance, qu'elle soit explicite ou non, est coextensive à son objet; d'où l'on peut dire qu'il y a entre l'être et le connaître une absolue correspondance et une parfaite réciprocité; il est impossible que l'homme, si confusément que ce soit, ne forme pas en effet cette synthèse dont la science de l'action vient de faire l'analyse, et il est impossible que cette synthèse, revêtant à ses yeux une valeur objective, ne représente pas réellement ce qui est à connaître et à faire. - Puisque, d'autre part, il faut, pour atteindre au terme, passer par l'alternative et trancher le problème pratique qui s'offre à nous comme une question de vie et de mort, il en résulte qu'entre la connaissance et l'être il subsiste une radicale hétérogénéité, qu'entre la vue et la possession de l'être la distance demeure infinie, et que, s'il y a un être nécessaire de l'action, l'action n'a pas nécessairement l'être en elle. L'universelle nature des choses, la personne humaine, Dieu, la vie surnaturelle sont sans doute des conditions requises par l'action et fondées en elle; mais l'action ne se fonde pas nécessairement en Dieu, et ne réalise pas forcément toutes les conditions qu'elle pose elle-même.²⁹⁵

Here, therefore, the problem of knowledge and being takes on a new meaning - the method and the solution are transformed.

Blondel insists that it is an illusion to think that we can

arrive at being and affirm, in a legitimate way, any reality, without reaching the end of the series which extends from the first sensible intuition to the necessity of God and of religious practice.²²⁴ By the same token, Blondel also affirms that it is equally wrong to think that human conduct is independent of all metaphysical views, that practice is sufficient unto itself and that it is possible to live without any concern for being.²²⁵ Blondel argues against two doctrines, first the ancient one where the will acts in conformity with an object, secondly the modern one where the will is said to create its own object and goes forward towards belief. In their place Blondel argues that "knowledge and action are mutually autonomous and subordinated, that between truth and being there is a fundamental identity and a fundamental heterogeneity", in other words, "that there subsists a necessary presence of reality in thought without reality being necessarily present to thought".²²⁶ In Blondel's view, those who have attributed the most decisive role in knowledge to the will do not take into account the diversity which is introduced into knowledge by the "supreme option".²²⁷ Accordingly, this option makes all the difference in the world - whether or not we accept the "action of truth" in us, our being is totally changed.²²⁸

At this point Blondel raises an important question: "how does perfect action bring to consummation all that had served to constitute it?"²²⁹ What this means is that the

conditions, which action supposes in order for it to become adequate to its exigencies, must be shown in an inverse manner "to be a reality which requires of it what is required for it to become equal to itself".³⁰² In essence, then, Blondel maintains a heterogeneity while at the same time maintaining a solidarity of knowledge and being. Being has imposed itself from the outside and has come from the most intimate freedom: These two aspects are correlative because, as Blondel says, "they are equally grounded in the living truth which makes up all that is substantial in things and still constitutes what is positive in privative knowledge and real in the error that denies it".³⁰³

Integral Realism

So far, in the regressive analysis, we saw in the phenomenology the entire nature of things appears as a series of means that one has to will and employ in order to accomplish one's destiny. But the question remains: how did it happen that this "series of means" appear as "a real nature of things"?³⁰⁴ It is necessary to explain why this series of determinisms takes on a character of a real truth. We may argue here that we cannot have the notion of a true existence without the entire series of determinisms being included in our knowledge. One cannot affirm the truth of one of these solitary objects without including all the other at the same time. As an analogy we can say that an organ in the

human body can be defined only in relation to other parts of the body because the end product of all relations is more than the sum of the parts. There is no part without a whole nor is there a whole without the parts. The hierarchy of what is willed is modeled in a similar way. In fact, the entirety of existence is an open-ended hierarchy.³⁰⁵

Blondel maintains that we cannot deny nor undo the universal order of determinisms. Blondel argues that there is a will "prior and immanent to any derogation from the necessities of practice" as well as there is "an affirmation of being anterior and interior to any effort at even a complete negation".³⁰⁶ To be sure, inasmuch as the universal determinism may be in us, it always appears as independent of our power, our will, and our thought. While the universal determinism is linked to the production of the subject, it is the object in our eyes. It has to, otherwise, we would not see it in a system of means and ends for our will. There is a paradox here: While the role of this determinism imposes an alternative to our freedom, we also face something that is ours, by the very fact of our productions of thought. This determinism incarcerates us, yet, we will it. Therefore it appears as objective reality. In short, the integral series of determinisms is a total unity of a part/whole, a Janusfaced holon.³⁰⁷ Blondel writes,

Bref, ce qui est nécessairement volontaire est conçu comme réel et indépendant de nous, parce que ce doit être

librement voulu. Causalité et finalité, objets enchaînés devant l'entendement et fins ordonnées dans la volonté, c'est ainsi que l'être et la pensée sont l'un pour l'autre. L'idée de l'être est subjective, parce nous l'impliquons dans tout acte de volonté; l'idée de l'être a, pour nous, un sens objectif, parce que ce qui est produit en nous nous apparaît comme un système de moyens et de fins encore extérieurs à notre vouloir et à notre être; car sans l'assimilation de ces objets et la possession de ces fins nous ne sommes pas ce que nous voulons être. Ce n'est encore là que la simple notion abstraite et générale de l'existence objective; mais déjà, pour en expliquer la génération nécessaire dans la conscience, il faut arriver à voir que le problème intellectuel de l'être est posé en même temps que le problème moral de notre être.³⁰⁰

Thus, the idea of being is subjective but its meaning is objective because the idea of universal determinism is a "series and it is a system".³⁰¹ It is also necessary to affirm, however, the reality of the objects which constitute the reality of the system. Because the laws that govern the concrete are only abstractions, this abstract conception has to be realized in concrete objects in order that the notion of objective existence be in consciousness. In this way the notion of objective knowledge and that of real existence are linked together.³⁰² Each object in the series is both dependent and autonomous simultaneously and each term is both a means and an end, a part of a larger link but a whole in and of itself. Blondel says that,

L'idée nécessaire que nous avons de la réalité objective, quoique indépendante en nous de ce qui peut être voulu par nous, a pour effet nécessaire de subordonner la possession de cette réalité même à l'usage de notre volonté. Ce qu'il y a d'inévitable dans la connaissance est impliqué dans toute démarche volontaire; voilà pourquoi il est inévitable que cette connaissance nécessaire, ne se tenant jamais au caractère encore purement subjectif dont elle est revêtue, nous mette en

demeure d'agir et fasse dépendre sa portée objective de l'action voulue.³¹¹

From all of this three conclusions are reached by Blondel. In the first place, each of the successive objects must be considered as it is, that is, in its originality, independent of the relations it sustains with all the rest. It must be remembered, however, that each of these objects had appeared to us as a synthesis that is irreducible to its elementary conditions. In the second place, as each term, (whether it be consciousness, science, social action, morality etc..) is linked to each other by a solidarity that we cannot know nor affirm without implying them all, the objects are "neither more nor less real at one point of the series than at a neighboring point".³¹² Thirdly, we have the ethical affirmation of Being:

Il n'est donc aucun objet dont il soit possible de concevoir et d'affirmer la réalité sans avoir embrassé par un acte de pensée la série totale, sans se soumettre en fait aux exigences de l'alternative qu'elle nous impose, bref sans passer par le point où brille la vérité de l'Être qui illumine toute raison et en face de qu'il faut que toute volonté se prononce. Nous avons l'idée d'une réalité objective, nous affirmons la réalité des objets; mais, pour le faire, il est nécessaire que nous posions implicitement le problème de notre destinée, et que nous subordonnions tout ce que nous sommes et tout ce qui est pour nous à une option. Nous n'arrivons à l'être et aux êtres qu'en passant par cette alternative: selon la façon même dont on la tranche, il est inévitable que le sens de l'être soit changé. La connaissance de l'être implique la nécessité de l'option; l'être dans la connaissance n'est pas avant, mais après la liberté du choix.³¹³

Blondel warns us that the idea of objective existence and the inevitable belief in the objects of representation

still express only an internal necessity because "it is what we can accept or reject that we must find the true reality of the objects imposed on knowledge".³¹⁴ Blondel points out that the real truth of objects "consists in what it depends on us to will or not to will in them" or, in other words, "for them to be in us, we must will them to be for us what they are in themselves".³¹⁵ Thus, the truth of objects resides not in the representation we have of them. What is at issue here is the entire system, that the chain or link as we may call it is single - "everything, then, depends on the attitude adopted in the race or the one thing necessary, since it is the principle of the entire series, and since the sequence of the total determinism results in bringing us back to it without fail".³¹⁶ From this it is understood that the knowledge of reality is distinct from reality. What this means for Blondel is that it is impossible for things to remain as they are. There is a conversion that takes place, because, prior to the option, the knowledge was subjective and propulsive, but now after the option it becomes privative and constitutive of being.³¹⁷ Knowledge, therefore, does not change objects; it merely changes in nature. The result is an intellectual difference between two knowledges. Blondel writes,

La première, en effet, celle qui pose nécessairement le problème et nous procure une vue intégrale, quoique souvent confuse ou réduite, de l'ordre universel, n'est encore qu'une représentation de l'objet dans le sujet; ou, pour mieux dire (afin de marquer nettement l'origine de cette vérité subjective), ce n'est que la production

par l'homme de l'idée que les objets de sa pensée et les conditions de son action sont forcément réelles. La seconde de ces connaissances, celle qui succède à la détermination librement prise en face de cette réalité nécessairement conçue, n'est plus seulement une disposition subjective; au lieu de poser le problème pratique, elle en traduit la solution dans notre pensée; au lieu de nous mettre en présence de ce qui est à faire, elle recueille, dans ce qui est fait, ce qui est. C'est donc vraiment une connaissance objective, même alors qu'elle est réduite à constater le déficit de l'action. Car ce qui, avant l'option consommée, n'est encore que vue de l'esprit, devient, après, conscience d'une lacune réelle et, si l'on peut dire, d'une privation positive.

When we uphold what is purely subjective, that is, what is necessarily present to thought, nonetheless, "the truth denied and excluded is being". In this way the distinction and solidarity of knowledge and being is upheld. The distinction is complete because if thought inevitably proposes to us the universal order of things, "this representation of reality is independent of the act on which will depend whether reality itself will be or not be for us and in us" and solidarity is complete because, "if willing resolves the problem raised by the understanding reciprocally the nature of the solution, that is, the very meaning of being and the way the truth is in us, will be tied to the option of the will".

The Ethics of Practice.

Thus Blondel is not saying that thought and action are independent or are subordinate one to the other, but, rather, "are mutually for one another a rule and a

sanction".⁵²¹ In this way knowledge is said to affirm the infinite to the one who has denied it because above the errors and the deviations of every nature there "subsists a truth which ... is its own proof" and this very truth "maintains its sovereign rights over every reason and every freedom".⁵²² But what is the minimum of being which subsists in one who has cut off from all being all that cannot be willed?

Blondel maintains that subjective knowledge of the truth remains whole and positive but the objective reality, while it is whole, is negative. This he explains:

Car, en sachant ce qui est à savoir, il sait également que la possession réelle de ce dont il s'est privé lui eut apporté un surcroît infini de clarté et de joie. C'est donc ce surcroît qu'il reste à définir: car la privation n'est réelle que par contraste avec la possession véritable, et c'est toujours le propre de l'action de garder en elle quelque chose des contraires entre lesquels elle a opté, quelque chose de ceux mêmes qu'elle a exclus. Mais toujours aussi la synthèse qu'elle forme est originale: et jamais la science des contraires n'est identique. Si la connaissance subjective de la vérité, quoique coextensive à la connaissance privative de la réalité, a paru toute différente d'elle, la connaissance achevée qui unit à la vue du vrai l'entière possession du réel, différera de l'une et l'autre, quoique l'une et l'autre ne subsistent qu'en se rapportant à ce parfait achèvement.⁵²³

In this way, in order for the truth to live in the knowledge we have of it, we have to "will what is capable of not being willed, and make the free adherence which truth demands equal to what it imposes of inevitable clarity".⁵²⁴ The issue, of course, is not of making reality subsist in us but rather a question of making it be in us "because it is and it is in

itself".³²⁵ The act of the will does not make truth depend on us but makes us depend on truth and it was the necessary knowledge that prepared the option. Therefore, from Blondel's point of view, what was merely an idea of an object becomes, in truth, objective certitude and a real possession. What has to be seen is how this determinism, which has to be affirmed and willed by what is most intimate in ourselves, finds between these two subjective terms a truly objective reality, without ceasing to be ours. This reconciles the "necessary originality of thought with the necessary authority of truth".³²⁶ According to Blondel, the universal order is real in our knowledge only as long as we fully accept what is necessary about it. Blondel explains:

Si notre volonté propre nous empêche de parvenir à notre volonté vraie, rien ne peut être réellement en nous, tant que nous n'avons pas résigné cette solitude de l'égoïsme par une substitution du vouloir divin à l'amour-propre qui perd tout en voulant gagner. Il faut donc comprendre cette double vérité: nous ne saurions arriver à Dieu, l'affirmer vraiment, faire comme s'il était et faire en réalité qu'il soit, l'avoir à nous qu'en étant à lui et qu'en lui sacrifiant tout le reste: tout le reste ne communique à nous que par ce médiateur, et la seule façon d'obtenir le tous à tous c'est de commencer par le seul à seul avec lui. Non, on ne saurait être à soi ni aux autres sans être à lui d'abord.

Here Blondel begins, as we note, to give attributes to God by stating that "to know God ... is to bear in us His spirit, His will, His love".³²⁷ This theological language seems appropriate here because it is here that he maintains that "sacrifice is the solution to the metaphysical problem through the experimental method".³²⁸ This is because in the

very end itself the knowledge which follows the perfect act of abnegation must contain a fuller revelation of being".³⁴⁰ At this point, Blondel argues that action no longer sees being from the outside; rather, it has grasped it, possesses it and finds it within itself".³⁴¹ It is here that philosophy shows its true colours, because, in Blondel's words, "true philosophy is the sanctity of reason".³⁴²

Now we are ready to ask ourselves an important question: how is the universal union consummated in us? Furthermore, how are we distinct and singular in this total universal communion? To be sure, the understanding we have of others is grounded on affection, therefore, being is love. This is because abnegation of the ego opens up the self to other and to exclude ourselves from ourselves by abnegation engenders universal life within ourselves. Blondel insists that what imposes itself on knowledge necessarily is only appearance. Each being keeps within him "the intimate truth of his singular being" and this something within him is "something" others cannot lay hold of and this very "something" raises him above "the entire order of phenomena"; yet others hold within themselves "something" that is inaccessible to oneself - we remain isolated and wrapped in solitude, thereby, only "charity ... lives above appearances" and it is this charity that resolves the problem of knowledge and being.³⁴³

Charity, for Blondel, constitutes the method of appropriating because it lays the ground of making other and self identical in the absolutes. Hence, it is by making ourselves the impersonal object and devoted means at the service of others that renders it efficacious. The truth of love extends to sense life, to bodies that suffer and to brute matter; what we must love is the very physical and moral wretchedness that seems to leave one no longer a person. This, of course, goes beyond simple feelings; it requires us to let others be as they are, not what they ought to be. To give them being of ourselves, we have to wait for their real action to take hold of us and, in Blondel's words, "it is this reality itself which ... is the universal bond of solidarity", otherwise, how could one sacrifice his life to save one life.³³⁴

Blondel is certain that loving all men is the same as loving God. Without the love of members or humanity for one another, there can be no God for man because "at the bottom of things, in the common practice of life, in the secret logic of consciousness, without God there is no man for man".³³⁵ Hence the universal communion is the only means of possession and true distinction. True identity is reached when we lose ourselves to another; each is a singular, autonomous part given to the whole. This is the result of the mediating role of action - we gain most when we lose most. At this point Blondel concludes that it is not enough

to possess necessary knowledge and the idea of objective reality. Nor is it enough to have brought this truth within ourselves nor to have given ourselves to others. What is necessary is that we remain in ourselves and 'they' remainth themselves. This is because we are real and distinct only to the extent that they are also real and distinct.

The reality of things are now perceived synergistically because Blondel maintains that we are led to look for the objective reality of things "not in an ever fleeting underneath, nor in one of their aspects which they assume for the senses or for the understanding, nor in their metaphysical essence or in the intimacy of that uncommunicable life where we penetrate in loving them,⁴ but in all of this at once".³³⁴

Objective Realism

Blondel maintains that mediating action is not simply a necessary fact, but that it is in itself a truth. Mediation of action is independent of the realities it constitutes and its intrinsic reality grounds these very realities. Therefore, in Blondel's words,

C'est donc de la totalité du déterminisme apparent des phénomènes, qu'il faut établir la certitude propre, en considérant non plus ce qu'il nous impose à nous de connaissance nécessaire, mais ce qu'il contient de réalité en soi. Il faut qu'il soit ce qu'il paraît, et que ce qu'il a de nécessaire, d'objectif, d'extérieur, de despotique reste tel. Tout s'y tient: si tout n'y était pas réel, rien ne le serait: il faut donc aller jusqu'au bout de ces exigences, en montrant non plus que l'action médiatrice est un fait nécessaire à la constitution de tout l'ordre des choses, mais que la médiation de l'action est elle-même une vérité: qu'elle est réelle indépendamment des réalités dont elle constitue le rapport dans notre connaissance; et que ces réalités mêmes ne subsistent que parce que la médiation a une réalité intrinsèque. C'est-à-dire que toutes les conditions transitoires de l'action dont on a ramené l'apparente contrainte à n'être qu'une forme du vouloir le plus intime doivent devenir pour la volonté même une absolue nécessité et une règle définitive. Bref, il s'agit de conférer au phénomène tout l'être en soi qu'il comporte: c'est une nécessité qu'il en ait un; sinon, faute de cette petite pièce, tout ce qui est fait redeviendrait néant: l'ordre entier de la nature se disperserait, la personnalité même s'évanouirait, et rien de ce que nous avons conçu ne serait concevable: la solidité du système entier est intéressée à la consistance du moindre phénomène.

From a transcendental point of view, we see "the absorption of every distinct being into the divine immensity" because individual determinism is the means and condition that gives man this "immense dilation" - if man has a "divine vocation", it is on condition of remaining an individual, a distinct

person.³³⁶ Accordingly, the infinite lies in the concrete singular. Blondel offers this comment:

Le véritable infini n'est pas dans l'universel abstrait, il est dans le singulier concret. Par là même se manifeste, dans toute sa grandeur, le rôle de ce qu'on a nommé la lettre et la matière, de tout ce qui constitue l'opération sensible, de ce qui compose, à proprement parler, l'action, le corps de l'action. Car c'est par cette matière que se communique intimement à chaque individu la vérité de l'accablant infini; et c'est par elle que chacun est protégé contre l'accablement de l'infinie vérité. Pour atteindre l'homme, il faut que Dieu traverse toute la nature et s'offre à lui sous l'espèce matérielle la plus brute; pour atteindre Dieu, il faut que l'homme traverse toute la nature et le retrouve sous le voile où il ne se cache que pour être accessible: ainsi l'ordre naturel entier est entre Dieu et l'homme comme un lien et comme un obstacle, comme un moyen nécessaire d'union et comme un moyen nécessaire de distinction. Et quand, par une double convergence, chacun ayant fait toute la route au-devant de l'autre, Dieu et l'homme se sont rencontrés, cet ordre naturel reste embrassé dans leur mutuelle étreinte, devenant ainsi pour l'homme le sceau de son intime adhérence à son auteur et le sceau de son inaliénable personnalité.³³⁷

The question is posed by Blondel: how does the mediating relation realize itself? Blondel points out that science extracts from perception more than what we see. The sensible, in this case, is transcended and we can never go back to a flat-earth mentality. From such an analogy, the process must be repeated about every other object of knowledge for each term in the series of things. Therefore, the "appearing of the phenomena" must be raised "to the level of being and the absolute which it entails".³³⁸ Instead of placing reality in objects, Blondel wishes to place objects in reality - "instead of looking for what is outside of what appears, we must take what appears to be what is".³³⁹

Hence, it is imperative to understand what it is to be if we talk of objective existence.

Blondel reminds us that the entire order of phenomena is implied in every human action and the idea we have of it is engendered within, hence, this necessary knowledge is subjective. On the other hand, the total determinism of thought and of nature is reintegrated into the will of which it had appeared to be a spontaneous production. In the first case it is predicated on the fact that we have necessary knowledge of the entire order of phenomena while in the second case it is predicated on the fact that action looks for its fulfillment in the phenomena. hence, this voluntary possession is also subjective. But as Blondel points out, what is subjective in the first production of knowledge is not identical with what is subjective in the final possession of "acquired truth".³⁴ From the first knowledge to the final knowledge there comes into play the integral series of the things whose total interconnection the science of action has unraveled: This integral series was both a means and an obstacle and a desired end. But what is the difference between these two subjectivities?: between the first knowledge and the final possessed truth? Blondel writes,

Ce qui surgit du fond de notre aspiration volontaire, voilà ce qu'il faut nous assimiler par une adhésion pratique; le voulant à nous c'est dire qu'il n'est pas de nous; et l'action, en tendant à rendre subjective la réalité que nous proposait une première vue subjective de l'objet, détermine ce qui est proprement objectif dans notre connaissance. La différence de ces deux termes subjectifs, tel est exactement l'objet réel; et pour que

ce mot ait un sens, il faut qu'il s'applique à ces synthèses hétérogènes et solidaires qui nous ont apparu comme des intermédiaires naturels entre ce que nous voulons, parce que nous ne le sommes pas encore, et ce que nous devons être, parce que nous l'aurons voulu. D'eux-mêmes, ces deux termes sont irréductibles l'un à l'autre; ce qui les unit a forcément pour nous une réalité propre.³⁴³

It is a necessity for man that objective reality be because "in the spontaneous conviction of every man, it has no other meaning".³⁴⁴ But how does this knowledge (as objective) subsists objectively as it is affirmed and willed subjectively? Everywhere there is a mixture of "produced knowledge and knowledge undergone" and it is in that mixture where the secret of all real existence of objects as objects is found. It is here that Blondel sees the limitation of Kantian philosophy because it is grounded against every attempt to locate objective reality here or there in a term of the series of human knowledge. Thus, "the pretensions of Kantianism are illegitimate to the extent that ... they erect into a true and positive solution of a real problem the negative critique of a fictitious problem".³⁴⁵ To put the matter simply, Blondel states that Kantianism is "true in what it denies ... false in what it affirms".³⁴⁶ In going beyond Kant, Blondel has this to say:

Tout ce qu'on a appelé données sensibles, vérités positives, science subjective, croissance organique, expansion sociale, conceptions morales et métaphysiques, certitude de l'unique nécessaire, alternative inévitable, option meurtrière ou vivifiante, achèvement surnaturel de l'action, affirmation de l'existence réelle des objets de la pensée et des conditions de la pratique, tout n'est encore que phénomène au même titre. Qu'on les considère chacun à part; aucun ne peut être réalisé. Tous

appellent une critique qui nous emporte au delà de ce qu'ils sont, sans qu'on puisse s'y tenir, sans qu'on puisse s'en passer. Ni l'étendue ou la durée, ni le symbolisme scientifique, ni la vie individuelle, ni l'organisme social, ni l'ordre moral, ni les constructions métaphysique ne comportent d'être érigées séparément en réalités subsistantes: autant vaudrait dire que la société peut vivre sans la famille. Ce que l'Esthétique Transcendentale est pour les intuitions des sens, une critique analogue doit l'être pour les symboles scientifiques ou pour les conceptions rationnelles ou pour les lois de l'éthique. Chaque ordre de phénomènes est également original comme une synthèse distinct, transcendant par rapport à ceux qui en sont les conditions antécédentes, irréductible à ceux auxquels il semble subordonné comme à ses conséquents, solidaire avec tout, ne trouvant en aucun son explication totale, n'ayant sa réalité ni en lui ni dans nul autre. Prétendre découvrir dans l'un des anneaux du déterminisme la solidité de la chaîne entière parce que les autres anneaux sont sans consistance, cette recherche n'a pas de sens.³⁴⁷

In truth there are no privileged orders and the sensible phenomenon is filled with all the knowledge it seems to exclude but what actually implies. Therefore Blondel maintains that "each order of truths seems to constitute a sufficient whole and form a determinism exclusive of every other"; yet those determinisms are all connected - they make a total unity.³⁴⁶ From this Blondel upholds that "in the perception of the least fact is already contained the metaphysical or moral problem".³⁴⁷ Reality, therefore, resides in the multiplicity of the reciprocal relations which links them together; reality resides in this complexus. Within this series our knowledge is transformed and creates things because it acts as mediator. What knowledge undergoes, produces, and what it is is what constitutes objective existence. Reality, insists Blondel, must consist in what is

precisely determined and exactly knowable and it is "this mediating role which constitutes their being and which makes up their absolute truth".²³⁰ Blondel reinforces the issue by stating that "to be, for objects, is to subsist as they are known and willed by us independent of the failings of human action and knowledge".²³¹ But how is existence conceived?

Blondel maintains that matter has being only if being becomes matter itself, that is, "what is inner word and life in itself is really flesh".²³² What Blondel is saying is that what is distinguished by abstraction must remain indissolubly united. What is shown here is that its aspects is irreducible and its solidity cannot be disjoined. for, as Blondel says, "it is because it is not possible either to separate them or to reunite them that between these two known appearances there subsists what is their support and their bond, what makes up their solid truth".²³³ There is a double aspect of the knowledge of the double ground of the phenomenon, active and passive, sensible and real - "we act in them and on them. they act on us and in us".²³⁴ Therefore it is correct to say that phenomena consists in what is immediately grasped by intuition and that they do not consist in what our senses do not perceive of them. Thus, while the two aspects of phenomena are real to the extent that, while irreducible one to the other, "they are bound together in the unity of one and the same act of the will, in

the perception of one and the same sensibility and one and the same reason".³³³ But how do they have the same subsistence?

Blondel answers that it is because reason is immanent to the sensible and the sensible is immanent to reason.³³⁴

Blondel explains:

Ainsi l'univers n'est que ma représentation; et il est la condition préalable et la vérité scientifique de la connaissance sensible que j'en ai. Le phénomène a donc, en ce qu'il perçoit, la réalité même de ce lien substantiel qui constitue la synthèse des éléments: car les choses qui n'existent pas pour soi et qui ne sont en soi que pour d'autres capables de les percevoir ont cette propriété d'être à la fois connues et senties; c'est ce qui leur appartient: nous sommes en elles par la connaissance rationnelle qui, grâce à son caractère d'universalité, les enveloppe toutes et en définit les rapports selon l'ordre intelligible de leur production; elles sont en nous par la perception sensible qui, grâce à son caractère singulier, les individualise et les qualifie. Nous avons donc une connaissance absolue du relatif en tant que relatif; et c'est pour cela que ce relatif est. Il est, sans qu'il faille chercher derrière le phénomène une explication qui le dénaturerait. Il est ce qu'il paraît dans tout la suite de ses manifestations hétérogènes, mais solidaires. Par la diversité de ses aspects, il est ambigu; et c'est cette ambiguïté qui en fait la vérité réelle. Son phénomène multiple est son être même.³³⁵

Therefore, according to Blondel the issue is simple: "to be objective is ... to be produced and undergone by a subject, for to exert a real action on a real being is to be real".³³⁶ Blondel stresses the facticity of action as constituting objective reality when he says that "for things to be truly, they must act; for them to act they must be perceived and known".³³⁷ But how does objective knowledge remain distinct from objective existence, although objective

knowledge is indispensable and identical to objective existence?

We must, of course, understand how thought itself is a middle term which can be expressed in function of the others. Thus, while affirming objective existence, we may ask how can it be realized, since it has to be realized for us. The question of being is final because Blondel is not seeking "to see how what is can be given" but "how what is given is".³⁰⁰ In being critical of the Kantian position Blondel maintains that "every subjectivist doctrine starts from a realist prejudice, contraries being always only the extreme of the same species".³⁰¹ To this Blondel adds that "a fully consequent idealism makes all the distinctions which separate it from realism disappear and suppresses what is artificial in the poorly phrased question it claimed to be resolving".³⁰² Therefore the problem for Blondel is to understand how what we know is real in the way that we know it. Blondel writes,

... aussi faut-il voir ce qui est nécessaire pour que, selon les exigences mêmes de notre pensée, cette existence soit nécessairement réalisée, même sans notre pensée; car cette pensée, pour être vraiment, a besoin que ces conditions dont elle est solidaire soient subsistantes elles aussi. Il ne s'agit donc plus simplement du phénomène sensible, mais de tous, mais des vérités positives ou métaphysique ou morales ou religieuses, mais de toute forme, de la réalité conçue dans l'unité multiple d'un même déterminisme.³⁰³

Again, how is it that what is appearance in us be really in things? This is such that objective truth exercise its power over us and reigns over us exteriorily. On this Blondel

writes,

C'est une necessite d'abord que l'ordre entier des choses, tel que la science de l'action l'a peu à peu déployé devant la connaissance réfléchie, ait, dans sa totalité, la même valeur objective: un anneau ne saurait y être moins solide, moins nécessaire, moins réel qu'un autre. Et, malgré l'extrême diversité des éléments qui composent la série, tous, aussi bien l'intuition sensible ou les vérités positives que les conditions de la vie individuelle, sociale ou religieuse participent à une seule et même nécessité hypothétique: tous, aussi bien l'affirmation du Dieu vivant que le phénomène physique le plus brut, ne sont encore que des formes d'un même besoin intérieur: tous par conséquent ont également besoin d'être fondés absolument en droit; et aucun ne peut l'être sans l'autre. La connaissance même qui paraît les contenir et les produire tous en nous, n'est, elle aussi, qu'un terme subordonné et nécessaire aux autres: voilà pourquoi en rejoignant la suppression de notre conscience individuelle, nous ne supprimons pas l'idée de la conscience, parce que, tout en paraissant soutenir le reste, elle est soutenue par tout le reste. Par ma pensée, je ne réussis pas à abolir la pensée, ni même à concevoir qu'elle soit abolie: j'ai beau supposer, l'absence de ma personne, je laisse invinciblement subsister en moi l'impersonnel, c'est-à-dire la nécessité au moins d'une personne hors de moi, pour soutenir tout ce qui est, ou tout ce qui peut être, de sa pensée et de sa volonté: ainsi subsiste-t-il en nous une vérité nécessaire et impersonnelle qui est notre, au moment où nous la jugeons indépendante de nous, et qui est indépendante de nous, au moment où nous reconnaissons que nous n'avons de pensée propre que par sa présence en nous. Conferer au déterminisme des objets qui n'avaient encore d'existence que dans la mesure où ils sont requis par l'action une valeur objective, c'est attribuer à chacune des synthèses qui le composent une réalité propre: or, il n'est possible de le faire qu'en n'exceptant aucune des parties solidaires de l'ensemble, et qu'en faisant rentrer ma pensée même dans la série au même titre que tout autre phénomène contingent. Les choses sont sans moi, comme elles sont par moi et comme je suis par elles. Aussi, dès l'instant où la série totale a revêtu ce caractère d'objectivité, la nécessité de ce déterminisme extérieur cesse-t-elle d'être conditionnelle pour devenir absolue: les rôles sont comme intervertis; et d'exigée qu'elle était par le développement de la volonté, la vérité objective devient exigeante et dominatrice.

In order to subsist this multiplicity of objects

necessitates that their varied aspects be perceived from a particular viewpoint in order to bring it back to unity. Here Blondel insists on the necessity of a new knowledge in order to accomplish this. In order that things perceived are perceived as they are a passive knowledge is not enough. There has to be a "rational and productive knowledge"; but even this is not enough; there has to be a perceptive and passive knowledge. According to Blondel, then, the reality of things consists in mediating between this double aspect of knowledge. In this manner, "the objective reality of beings is therefore tied to the action of a being who, in seeing, makes what he sees be, and who, in willing, becomes himself what he knows". Therefore Blondel sees things as they are, that is, as objective reality because the "principle and the end of their unfolding" is in one and the same "center".

We see that the total determinism is essential to each of the terms and thought is, in turn, essential to the same total determinism, because it is thought that envelops the total determinism in a unity of voluntary action. In this way, Blondel is able to argue that the Cartesian criterion of divine truth provides only an appearance of a foundation for real truth. Here Blondel maintains that in order that what is known should be, "it is not enough that a real being should know, this being has to be what it is to be known, so that this known may have being". In this way Blondel's

position, as it was stated earlier, synthesizes Spinoza and Kant and goes beyond them:

C'est donc aller plus loin et que tout réalisme et que tout idéalisme: car là où l'on prétendait trouver déjà, sous le nom de métaphysique et d'ontologie, la vérité de l'existence objective, il ne faut voir encore que phénomènes déterminés et solidaires: là où l'on croyait rencontrer que phénomène irréalisable, il faut avoir retrouvé déjà la solidité de l'être qui les voit et les fait tous ce qu'ils sont, depuis les formes les plus riches de la pensée et de la vie jusqu'aux faits les plus bruts. La prétendue chose en soi est un phénomène encore: et c'est le phénomène qui devient véritable chose en soi: double avantage, de ramener ainsi à la science ce qui semblait étranger à l'ordre des faits positifs, et de porter à l'être ce qui semblait étranger à l'ordre de l'absolue réalité. Accordingly, the

reality of the phenomenon, the total system and the

"commonwealth of spirits" would disappear without this

"double tie of the relative to the absolute and of the

absolute to the relative". This view for Blondel is

so important, for without it, we would not be able to

ground the existence of anything. Here Blondel's,

metaphysics to the second power alludes to the mediation of Christ:

Passive en son fond, il faut, pour être, que la nature ait une action véritable, et que cette action trouve, dans la passion volontaire d'un être capable de conférer à sa connaissance un caractère d'absolu, sa parfaite consistance. Peut-être que, destiné à recevoir en lui la vie divine, l'homme eut pu jouer ce rôle de lien universel et suffire à cette médiation créatrice, parce que cette immanence de Dieu en nous serait comme le centre magnétique qui relierait toutes choses, ainsi qu'un faisceau d'aiguilles invisiblement rattachées par un puissant aimant. Mais aussi pour que, malgré tout, la médiation fût totale, permanente, volontaire, telle en un mot qu'elle assurât la réalité de tout ce qui sans doute pourrait ne pas être, mais de ce qui, étant comme il est, exige un divin témoin, peut-être fallait-il un Médiateur qui se rendit patient de cette réalité intégrale et qui

fut comme l'Amen de l'univers, testis verus et fidelis qui est principium creaturae Dei. Peut-être fallait-il que, devenu chair lui-même, il fit, par une passion nécessaire et volontaire tout ensemble, la réalité de ce qui est déterminisme apparent de la nature et connaissance forcée des phénomènes objectifs, la réalité des défaillances volontaires et de la connaissance privative qui en est la sanction, la réalité de l'action religieuse et de la sublime destinée réservée à l'homme pleinement conséquent à son propre vouloir. C'est lui qui est la mesure de toutes choses.

As we think and as we act we imply, to be sure, the immense organism of necessary relations but in reflection we unveil what we have to admit in order to think and affirm in order to act. We are brought to the moment of conceiving objective existence to posit the reality of objects that are conceived and ends sought. We are also brought to suppose the conditions that are required in order for this reality to subsist. In a reciprocal manner we cannot not be immanent in thought; we make ourselves immanent to ourselves. What is the result of this reflection?

Blondel maintains that when all the conditions of thought and action are defined and when all the content of life has been integrated into consciousness, we "must ... think that it is; this is why we ought to ... do as if it were".³⁷² Blondel insists that the natural order guarantees the supernatural order by requiring it because, in another way, "the theoretical impossibility of doubt ... entails the practical affirmation of reality" and this, for Blondel, takes place "when the practical possibility of negation seems to entail the theoretical impossibility of certitude".³⁷³

Moral obligations are only a necessity "suspended in appearance" but sooner or later "what must be will be, for it is what already is". Hence, all errors, faults, deviations etc... are forever and always grounded in truth. "Duty is what is", says Blondel, but that also includes every deviation from duty.

Science cannot find the difference between what appears to be forever and what is nor can it distinguish a reality itself from an invincible and permanent illusion. But, when it comes to practice, it is a different story. If it is true, "only practice possesses what is". Theory is no match for practice and Blondel warns us that no one should claim to have found in a theory a "deceitful equivalent for what is" because "we do not solve the problem of life without living": hence, science justifies the role of action and the "science of practice establishes that there is no substitute for action". Therefore, in Blondel's view it is necessary to suppose the necessity of the natural order, of the supernatural order, and of the "divine intermediary who makes up their bond and their subsistence". The confirmation is found nowhere but in practice and we cannot encounter its affirmation anywhere but in effective practice. But what happens when action has given us this confirmation? We can say that all the links are attached to all the elements of the series. Therefore the two ends of the chain (means and goals, effective cause and final cause) are

joined. The necessity of the total determinism is taken up into a "free act of the will" and the mediating role of action becomes justified and grounded. Now, this mediation is viewed as the principle of unity and distinction, in Blondel's words, "we are beings in Being".³⁰⁰ Thus, the appearances, the conflicts, the illusions etc... are not abolished. They "participate in the absolute truth of the divine knowledge of the Mediator".³⁰⁰ Of course, the human person is mortal—but his acts are beyond his finite world. Human destiny, therefore, or the ethical life is when man "uses and enjoys universality at the same time as the singularity of his personal life".³⁰¹ From an ethics of possessive knowledge, then, because man is called "to see all things in the unity of the divine plan, through the eyes of the Mediator ... he is this very act of his author and he produces it in himself as it is in Him".³⁰² In short, the ethical moment comes when "through his willing ... he is united to the will which has always been".³⁰³

Thus, having observed the sequence of the requirements of human action we find ourselves in the presence of an inevitable term, the uniquely necessary, from which hangs all the development of life and thought. The last link, however, depends on all others before it. Therefore, what goes prior as well as with what follows is in conformity with our deepest aspiration. But all the elements that make up the chain of determinism (the sensible, he

scientific, the intellectual; the social, the moral, the political, the religious) find their "principle and authority" above us.³⁶⁴ But it was not necessary to recover the series through an effort of the will because to justify the "exterior subsistence of the truth interior to man" there has to be a metaphysics to the second power", to ground, not simply what a first metaphysics does (subjective representation of being) but all the determination of nature, life and thought.³⁶⁵ Blondel writes:

Dès que la chaîne est nouée, tout le déterminisme, qui était apparu comme le phénomène de la volonté humaine dans l'entendement, apparaît donc désormais en même temps comme une absolue réalité qu'impose l'entendement à la volonté. En sorte que, à la vérité du primat de l'action, Im Anfang war die That, 'au commencement était l'Action' répond la grande affirmation de l'égale primauté de la vérité: 'Principio erat Verbum'. Ce règne de la vérité est tout entier hors de nous, elle ne sera jamais désarmée de son spectre de fer; mais aussi ce règne de la vérité est tout entier en nous, puisque nous en produisons en nous-même toutes les despotiques exigences. Rien, dans la destinée humaine, de tyrannique; rien, dans l'être, d'involontaire; rien, dans la connaissance vraiment objective, qui ne sorte du fond de la pensée, c'est bien là solution du problème de l'action; et voilà resserré le noeud commun de la science, de la métaphysique et de la morale. Du moindre de nos actes, du moindre des faits, il suffit de tirer ce qui s'y trouve, pour rencontrer l'inévitable présence, non pas seulement d'une abstraite cause première, mais du seul auteur et du vrai consommateur de toute réalité concrète. Jusqu'au dernier détail du dernier des phénomènes imperceptibles, l'action médiatrice fait la vérité et l'être de tout ce qui est. Et il serait étrange en effet qu'on put expliquer quoi que ce soit hors de celui sans qui rien n'a été fait, sans qui tout ce qui a été fait redevient néant.³⁶⁶

At this point we may wrap up the metaphysics that we find at the end of L'Action(1893). In the same way that the necessary idea of God comes from action, so too does the

necessary idea of revelation come from action. A living revelation must come from a source outside of ourselves and at the same time be immanent in us, otherwise religious activity would be idolatrous. Only by action can there be hope for the workings of the divine light within the human spirit. Just as reason was the fruit of action and a new point of departure for further actions, so is faith a result of the insufficiency of willing and at the same time a springboard for a different kind of willing - willing the self over to practice. What Blondel attempts to do is justify the possession of a real truth as the foundation of religious practice. This results in a metaphysics to the second power.

This kind of metaphysics does not erect itself as a religion but rather fulfills the role of justifying the dialectic of action, specifically the necessity of a mediating action. This therefore is the metaphysical affirmation of the subordination of human action to divine action. Therefore, Blondel coordinates truth and action from the point of view of the absolute whereas from the human point of view thought is necessarily subordinated to action. An absolute monism would be justified only in idea. Blondel did not want to juxtapose a philosophy of essence with a philosophy of existence because such a position would leave outside of metaphysics an irreducible element which escaped Schelling's distinction between positive and negative

philosophy. The same element is missing in Kant's distinction of pure and practical reason, in Fichte's distinction between faith and reason, Schelling's earlier distinction between a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of the ego, and Hegel's distinction between a material dialectic and formal logic.

To summarize, therefore, we can state that Blondel's thesis is the attempt to bring Catholic thought in line with modern thought, both intellectually and morally. We have seen to what an extent Blondel is the end of a long evolution, the convergence of two approaches to the problematic of the Kantian legacy and subsequent developments. We have focused on an aspect of Blondel that has generally been overlooked, that of ethics. Furthermore we have presented Blondel's thesis as a hermeneutical reading of human existence, in which the immanent and transcendent nature of human destiny is inscribed by the logic of a mediation of action, metaphysically justified from a sanctified will penetrated by the exigency of a supernatural gift without which human willing could not be adequate to itself. Using the insights of Jean Nabert's ethical concerns we viewed Blondel's effort as being an ethic in the tradition of Spinoza, synthesized with the work of Kant and developed from the spiritualist and reflective tradition rooted in Maine de Biran. In short we argue for the compatibility of a poetics of the will with a grounding of ethics.

CONCLUSION: A POETIC ETHIC OF GRACE

We have seen to what extent Catholic thought in nineteenth-century France had to wage a battle with the legacy left by Kant and post-Kantians. What scandalised Catholic thought was that, according to Kant, reason could no longer support faith. Faith, after Kant, it seemed to Catholics, had to stand on its own. Furthermore philosophy declared itself autonomous and achieved new scope as demonstrated by Hegel and the use of German thought in general. This importation of foreign thought into France was too powerful and persistent to be ignored: the official philosophy of the university had to contend with it under the leadership of Cousin and, in a separate form, Catholic apologetics also had to come to terms with it.

Both streams (eclecticism, Catholic apologetics) set the tone for what was to follow during the rest of the century. Therefore we can conclude that there were two linear parallel historical developments that took place governed by the legacy of Kant. On the one hand, Cousin's eclecticism, when coupled with Renouvier (who was influenced by Comte and Lequier), resulted in the philosophical stream under the heading of spiritualism whose authors are associated with the names of de Biran, Ravaisson, Lachelier, and Boutroux. The second stream that we are referring to comes from the

thought of the theologian Bautain (who reacted against eclecticism by Platonizing German thought) whose work led to a new kind of Catholic apologetics associated with Gratry and Ollé-Laprune. The end of de Biran's stream ends with the name of Boutroux and the end of Bautain's stream ends with the name of Ollé-Laprune both of whom were Blondel's influential mentors.

Both streams, the philosophical and the theological, are integrated in L'Action (1893) in such a subtle manner that Blondel's work has been the object of a long-standing polemic between philosophers and theologians. This thesis, however, is not concerned with the question whether L'Action (1893) is a work of Catholic apologetics or of philosophy of religion we rather examine it in terms of ethics. We did notice that there were important developments in nineteenth-century France that presented a challenge for ethical thinking. For example, eclecticism did not do much for ethics except render German thought more confusing than it already was. Cousin's political spirit of compromise, laudable though it might have been, stunted any development that may have arisen on philosophical fronts. Instead Catholic thought was an endless battle between a traditional and reactionary mode of moral thinking on the one hand and a liberal response on the other hand.

In other parallel developments two movements, positivism and pessimism, one a product of France, the other

a product of Germany addressed themselves to the moral condition. We have seen how positivism had attempted to eliminate moral elements that belonged to the sphere of religion simply because freedom was held suspect and the subject was not deemed to be the point of reference. Man was viewed as a victim of deterministic circumstances that were measurable by science and it was that quantitative aspect of the empirical methodology that rendered it a powerful force in an age of technological growth. The age of metaphysics and religion was viewed as a lost age of innocence.

In addition to the scientific mood there emerged into full bloom by the end of the century a mood of anxious boredom under the heading of pessimism. If positivism presented a moral problem to the human intellect, then pessimism was the moral problem of the attractive and imaginative aspect of the human condition. The two streams of thought were attempts to come to terms with these moral conclusions: the spiritualist provided Blondel with the form of the solution while Christian apologetics provided him with the method of reaching the solution. What the spiritualist philosophy argued against was the prevalent belief that nature was a blind and mechanical activity. Furthermore it provided a model of nature that was hierarchical, voluntary, and free. What this meant was that nature, including man, was a dynamic infinity of becoming, whereby determinism and spontaneity were alternating moments of being. Furthermore

the spiritualist philosophy also provided Blondel with a part/whole relation of being at every level of the hierarchy. Against the axiom of science which values only efficient causes they argued in favor of final causes because every being tends always towards completion and therefore an immanent final cause determines the behavior of a part of the whole. To put it in another way, the whole determines the parts as much if not greater than the parts determine the whole. This enterprise suggested a spiritual realism. Finally, emergence and synergy are the key elements that define the dynamism of the human spirit. This meant that being is not reducible to a mechanical explanation but by a spiritual force or activity that allows the emergence of being to be more than the sum of its parts. Thus the universe, from the lowest form of the inorganic world to the highest form of the organic world, there is a continual creative activity taking place such that a clear demarcation between determinism and indeterminism is impossible to maintain at any level of the hierarchy of being.

The entire enterprise of the spiritualist school was, therefore, able to provide sufficient ground to affirm an immanent moral logic simply because the being that tends to realize the good end it aims for is assured of his freedom. Freedom and necessity are not opposed but mutually help the realization of man's becoming. Hence, Blondel was provided a framework by that school of thought which allowed him to

argue for the interdependence of opposites:

autonomy/heteronomy, freedom/determinism, the spirit/the letter, immanence/transcendence. Thus we have a developmental process taking place at all levels of the hierarchy of being, free and spontaneous yet determined and mechanical. Looking from above everything recedes into a deterministic mode. looking from below, everything expands into a freedom of spontaneous action. The shift from molecular to cellular, from cellular to organic, from organic to psychological entails a movement from deterministic operation to one of free activity. The organism is not an aggregation of elementary parts, nor are they elementary units of behavior but rather a multi-levelled hierarchy of semi-autonomous sub-wholes. These sub-wholes are what Arthur Koestler calls holons whereby parts and wholes in an absolute sense do not exist. Holons, then, are self-regulating open systems which display the autonomous properties of wholes and the dependent properties of parts. This dichotomy occurs on every level of the hierarchy. Phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases are linguistic holons; individuals, families, nations are social holons. The polarity-between the self-assertive and integrative tendencies are inherent in the concept of hierarchical order. Furthermore, holons on successively higher levels of the hierarchy display increasingly complex and more flexible and less predictable patterns of activity while going down the level we notice increasingly mechanical.

stereotyped and predictable patterns of activity. There is an infinite regress in each direction. This model of the human body is extended to the entire phenomena of the universe.

It may be necessary at this time to point out that L'Action (1893) is basically a prolongation of Blondel's latin thesis De Vinculo Substantiali et de Substantia Composita apud Leibnitium. Blondel had understood Leibniz's hypothesis of the Vinculum as an attempt on the part of Leibniz to return to a position of realism after the phase of idealism. Against Descartes' belief that real things are what corresponds to the geometrical idea of extension, all other things being only appearances, Leibniz, guided by his integral calculus, maintained that the substance of things resides in the monads which he believed to be unextended elements, atoms or force or activity, centers of perception and appetites which develop immanently. But behind each phenomenon perceived Leibniz posed an composition of ideal elements inaccessible to the senses. Therefore from this it becomes apparent that Cartesian mechanism is quite true but only for what appears. Therefore two orders exist in parallel fashion, the world of bodies run by efficient cause and the world of spirit run by final causes. What Leibniz did by hypothesizing the Vinculum was give to the composition of bodies a unity irreducible to the sum of phenomenal and ideal elements. This Vinculum subsists independantly of phenomena and the monads while

unifying them. Blondel used this 'rien substantial' in order to explain the mediating role of action, the being of phenomena and the realising function of the Incarnation."

In short, it permits Blondel to reconcile the scientific order with the moral order: the spiritualist philosophy is reconciled with positivism. Again, what Leibniz did was to destroy the extended substance of Descartes and pose the monad as the center of perception of the universe. But towards the end of his life Leibniz wondered, perhaps, whether he missed a synthetic unity of composed substances. Thus, by formulating the hypothesis of the vinculum he resolves in advance the Kantian question of synthetic judgements." Blondel interpreted Leibniz as turning towards a superior realism surpassing the harmony of monads. Thus the rational elements and the fideist elements, realism and idealism are reconciled. In a word, Blondel's action is the concretization of the Vinculum.

The theological movement that followed in the wake of Kant began with Bautain and we have seen how he had accepted the Kantian critique as the starting point of the new apologetics. He followed Kant into the realm of fideism and to this added on the traditionalist viewpoint of the primacy of revelation. Therefore tradition and the human will are prior to any kind of reasoning. This meant that practical experience is prior to cognition. Furthermore Bautain believed that science's mechanical explanation of nature was

incorrect leaving open the road to divine inspiration and accessibility to grace. The road to the divine was through prayer, mysticism, and prayer rather than Kant's moral imperative.

Gratry, the heir to Bautain, had stated that being is prior to thought and is the first to argue for the proofs of the existence of God from the position of immanence: that the proofs are practical because the finite is stripped away by a dialectic of inward solicitation that is concrete and not abstract like in Hegel.

With Ollé-Laprune it becomes more apparent that a theology from within, that is, a theology of immanence insists on the rationality of man's willing. From Bautain, through Gratry, to Ollé-Laprune faith was not to be grounded upon the logic of the intellect but upon the logic of practical reason. In addition to this, in true Catholic fashion, Ollé-Laprune argues against the legacy of Kant that separates faith and reason, namely, that skepticism upholds a position of faith. Against this subjectivism Ollé-Laprune upholds that objective reality is prior to faith and this is upheld by tradition, the residue of objectivity. Therefore moral certitude is both an assent of reason and a consent of faith, transcendent and immanent. Thus, this theological heritage provided the methodological elements for Blondel that allows him to ground the elements of a foundation for ethics from a dynamic immanent operation of an explicit will

infinitely seeking the moral certitude required by an implicit will.

In summary, therefore, Blondel's foundational grounding of ethics revolves around these issues: the inadequation of the will to itself, the mediation of action in all its operation of its becoming, and the soteriological necessity of the gratuitous gift of the supernatural. These issues, the thesis argues, were already in their infancy in both streams of thought, the philosophical and the theological, and it was due to Blondel's systematic and creative originality that they were brought to light and ultimately to fruition.

We may at this point undertake the question of what I call Blondel's alleged poetics of the will. Why is it a poetics? It is in Aristotle's Poetics that we find the plea for a defense against Plato's belief that the poetic imitation of human action was negative and impotent activity because it encouraged an indulgence in our natural passions and desires. Because Aristotle rejected Platonic Ideas, he saw the imitation of action from a practical and concrete perspective, with no reference to the metaphysical dimension. It is axiomatic according to Aristotle that tragedy cannot exist without a plot, although it can without characters. From this he concluded that plot is the "heart and soul" of tragedy. Aristotle points out that unlike the historian who reports what has happened, the poet speaks of things that

can happen. Therefore Aristotle envisaged the poet having a philosophical concern with regards to universals and particulars. What can be argued here is the moral import of the poetical function: that there is an ethical dimension implied in narratives by the fact that it constitutes an imitation of human activity within a movement of time.

The itinerary of desire is a narrative movement through time. From a Blondellian perspective we can insist that the narrative need not have a character but is constituted by a becoming of what can happen. This itinerary in L'Action (1893) takes the form of a will and the plot is characterized by its deployment from the phenomenon of body to the body of phenomena.

We have pointed out the similarities between Nabert's Elements for an Ethic and Blondel's L'Action (1893) but we may still need to examine to what measure Blondel's work constitutes an exercise in ethical thinking. For Nabert ethics constitutes the reasoned history of our desire - a reflection on the itinerary of one's becoming in order to appropriate a primordial source of human existence from which man has fallen. The disproportion between the source of consciousness and consciousness itself manifests itself in the feeling of fault, failure, and solitude. The disproportion between the volonte voulue and the volonte voulante in Blondel is a measure of the necessity inscribed in the mediating effort of action. It is the forgetting of

that originary affirmation that elicits the sense of separation from oneself which reflection on the becoming, as manifested in signs, is the attempted recovery of the unification of the primal elan and the concrete willing.

It is in the sense rendered by Nabert that reflection is both an invention and a conversion, that is, it consists of making an inventory of phenomena and hermeneutically converting the series of determinisms into a higher viewpoint. There occurs in L'Action (1893) a shift from a regressive analysis to a synthetic understanding. The mid-point between both is the option. Moreover, reflection on the itinerary of the will reveals an inner logic that liberates the revealed self from the prior determinism in order to convert knowledge into a higher viewpoint, that is authentic and personal, objective and real.

The itinerary of the will reads as a narrative text that goes through a series of phenomenal determinisms (the organic experience, the world of sense, the world of science, art, social intersubjectivity, political life, superstitious and moral life) until the will can will no more until it chooses a yes or a no, the full significance of action or the end of action. Ethics can only begin after this option because this option renders possible a true and free reflection. Only from the perspective of a positive action can there be a shift from a sense of dependency upon one's past to one of liberation from one's past. The self, at this

moment of liberation possesses a certitude which, from the higher point of view, becomes an immanent transcendent. The discontinuity of actions becomes reabsorbed into a coherent sense of destiny.

The ethical aspect of Blondel consists in deciphering the representations of the will and finding within them a coherent moral logic that gives human destiny its true meaning. But even more than that, it also appropriates the total meaning of that itinerary to assure the fullness of being in practice. But it is apparent that for Blondel the fullness of human destiny depends on the gratuitous gift of God. Reflection acquires its true sense only when it is inseparable from the promotion of values which legitimates the open dimension of futurity. But there is more to it than this. In Blondel's Action (1893) there are two types of reflective activity that takes place. Reflection prior to the option and reflection after the option has been opted in a yes manner. Therein lies the difference between a religious ethic and a Christian ethic. Reflection in the first context interprets the links of the series of determinism as means and efficient cause whereas from the higher viewpoint of a sanctified reflection the links in the chain of phenomena are ends in themselves and are the very principles of that itinerary through the series. The first reflection sees the will aiming at the transcendent but in the second reflection there is the recognition that the transcendent was there all

along as the ground and principle of that 'becoming'. Without the sanctification of the positive acceptance of the option, reflection reads the signs only as representations of the human will in search of that 'something' that pulls us out towards an endless and infinite horizon and that 'something' remains always an hypothesis - the unique necessary.

Reflection of a will that gave up its sovereignty sees that the transcendent is immanent. Therefore the source which we seek becomes possessed, as it were, as the source which seeks us. I may add that there is a kind of mystical moment of timelessness that takes place when we recover the future in the past - they may be called a Eureka discovery of the self: a timeless moment of insight where there is a fusion of memory with an undefined futurity.

We have seen the common connection between Blondel and Nabet in the figure of Maine de Biran, the founder of the French spiritualist school and the father of French voluntarism (who published very little during his time, hence he was relatively unread by the public). He may also belong to that stream of thought that includes Bautain, Gratry, and Ollé-Laprune who in their methodological concern maintain that religion contains the answers to the questions raised by philosophy. The voluntarist philosophy that he espoused was concerned with the action of thought insofar as it expresses the spontaneous, willing person whose volition and effort of the will is the very basis of his thinking and being. Like

Blondel he insisted that the will is ultimately impotent and only the gift of grace as an inward force would guarantee man's spiritual honor.

We have also seen to what extent Maine de Biran initiated the method of immanence by showing how effort is the root of consciousness and without it all activity and mental states cannot be accounted for. Willing for Maine de Biran was basic and prior to thinking. It is not difficult to see the impact he made on Blondel and Nabert. The foundation for a poetics of the will is clearly provided by Maine de Biran's entire enterprise which maintains that acts produce consciousness and that the Cartesian Cogito may not be confused with either the act of understanding or with a method for grounding the objectivity of knowledge. Nabert's synthesis of Kant and Maine de Biran provides us with a philosophy of act that would account within itself for the function of truth and objectivity. The problem is to transcend the Kantian dichotomy between noumenal freedom and empirical causality.

The inadequation of existence to itself necessitates the appropriation of a primary affirmation through the signs in which its activity is displayed in the world and history. Both Blondel and Nabert saw that this ethics has its roots in Spinoza for whom ethics is the passage of man from slavery to happiness and freedom. This passage is governed, neither by a formal principle of obligation, nor by an intuition of goals

and values but rather by an unfolding of effort, conatus. This conatus is the foundation of the 'I am' which must be recovered because it is 'fallen'. The task of ethics, as we saw, is to reappropriate the effort to be. However, this effort remains a desire, a desire to be which signifies a lack or a need and it is this felt inadequation of one's existence to oneself that converts our effort into a desire, the eros of Plato or, as we saw in Nabert, the unfolding of desire shifts from inclination, to tendency, to aspiration. Thus to affirm being within the lack of being (the falling away from one's destiny) constitutes fundamental ethics.

What I argue here is that Blondel's L'Action (1893) is an attempt to affirm this being within the lack of being by a deciphering of a dynamic willing, which in its dualistic function underscores the shift from effort to desire and is represented in signs that are decoded in order to retrieve the originary affirmation of being.

Ricoeur tells us that philosophy is ethical when it transforms alienation into beauty and freedom.¹¹ What Blondel tells us is that this transformation cannot come about in the concrete without the efficacious gift of grace when the human subject submits his will to a power than is not his. But we must not forget the fundamental ingredient: reflection is desire itself. In this sense therefore desire turns back upon itself in search of itself. After desire had exhausted itself it had to give up something in order to gain

something. Desire had to give itself up in order to gain the fullness of its origin. The nihilist wills nothing in order to gain everything. Has Blondel come full circle? No. The difference between the nihilist who rejects action and the one who affirms it revolves around the realization that the supernatural has been there all along at the center of volonte voulante and at the circumference of our volonte voulue. Ethic in the Christian sense of it from Blondel's position consists of the recognition that the transcendent feature of grace lies both behind and ahead of our desire to be. The history of our desire to be is both centered and circumscribed by the supernatural and it is the task of a Christian ethic to recover the ground of that originary affirmation - I am.

To illustrate the above we may turn to two Catholic novels that feature this ethic (reasoned history of our desire to be), namely, François Mauriac's The Knot of Vipers and George Bernanos' The Diary of a Country Priest.¹¹ Here both narrators are writing the confessional form of the autobiography which I believe have all the elements of an ethic in Nabert's sense of it. In The Knot of Vipers Louis is a wealthy man who is writing a letter to his wife which she is to receive only after his death because this letter explains why his children and grandchildren are being cheated out of their inheritance by him. He hopes that this "act of vengeance" which he has brooded for half a

century will be an epistle from the grave. What starts as a letter becomes a diary and Louis begins to notice that he is writing for himself and is appalled by the light that this confession sheds on his deepest self; that his heart is a knot of vipers. But Louis' confession in its persistent unfolding reveals to him that a power is leading him on whose "mysterious hand" gives him the key to the truth of Love. From the very beginning of his malevolent epistle we can sense that Louis' writing is a restless search to loosen the knot of vipers that chokes his heart and that search itself is powered by grace. This is disclosed little by little as Louis' self merges more and more with the autobiography until its full discernment is experienced by Louis as he dies while he is writing.

In The Diary of a Country Priest the narrator is the Cure d'Ambricourt whose diary serves as a vehicle to be frank with himself and which he says is "like a voice" that always speaks to him and admits later on that he needs this diary because it "breaks up this wilderness", the dark night of the soul. The diary in a way provides him with the mirror of the self that serves to heal a soul that has gone astray from the center of its existence and wanders aimlessly among the objects of the world because his soul's destiny did not coincide with the affirmation of his true self - I am. The conquest of death is uttered in the last words of the priest at the time of his death when he says: "Grace is

everywhere..." where the supreme weakness of the self coincides with the supreme strength of the saint, the innocence of childhood with the maturation of adulthood. It is with the method of autobiography that the cure concludes that life is gained only at the price of death.

In conclusion, therefore, this thesis argues that Blondel's famous work L'Action (1893), understood in the light of Nabert's reflective philosophy derived from the model of Maine de Biran, suggesting a poetics of the will, provides us with the elements for an ethic, understood in the tradition of Spinoza, and grounds that ethic with the Augustinian model of a restless heart. This is coupled with an original sense of a term, action (extrapolated from a misunderstood aspect of a later concern of Leibniz) which is understood as a mediating concrete spirituality that is the source of the organization of existence. Furthermore this thesis has shown that Blondel is a descendent of two streams of thought (Catholic apologetics and French spiritualist philosophy) that played a major role in nineteenth-century France in combatting the moral bankruptcy of various movements such as positivism and pessimism and aided the inadequacy of eclecticism and Catholic scholasticism to come to terms with the Kantian legacy on behalf of a Catholic France.

One final note. It has also been displayed, I think, that Blondel's L'Action (1893) is a measurement of an ethic

that is universal and cosmic in scope, because unlike Nabert's concern with the concrete act of a reflecting subject, Blondel's concern is with the unfolding of willing on a cosmic scale, since it is in the particular and in the individual that the cosmos is signified. Reflection, thus, is not simply individual in nature but cosmic also. The ethical dimension is incarnational in the full Catholic sense. In short, the poetics of the will from a Blondelian perspective is also a poetics of a Catholic Christology.

NOTES: INTRODUCTION

¹Louis Dupré, A Dubious Heritage: Studies in the Philosophy of Religion after Kant, (New York/Ramsey/Toronto: A Newman Book, Paulist Press, 1977), p. 3.

²Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 26

³"Pour Blondel, le kantisme est un obstacle; par réaction contre la sagesse antique qui soumet entièrement la pratique à la contemplation, Kant s'est porté à l'autre extrême et a déclaré la morale indépendante de la métaphysique, plaçant ainsi entre la raison pratique et la raison spéculative la coupure que l'on sait: mais il n'est pas question de revenir purement et simplement à la position antique, car il reste exact qu'il y a un vide à combler.... Le kantisme ouvre une crise, mais cette crise n'est pas artificielle". Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Être et L'expérience morale chez Maurice Blondel, (Paris, Louvain: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1970), p. 193. Cf. Mary Jo Nye, "The Moral Freedom of Man and the Determinism of Nature: The Catholic Synthesis of Science in the Revue des Questions Scientifiques", British Journal for the History of Science, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1976, pp. 274-292. Also see Harry W. Paul, "The Crucifix and the Crucible: Catholic Scientists in the Third Republic", Catholic Historical Review, 58, 1972, 195-219.

⁴"Blondel est d'accord avec Secrétan pour affirmer, que le grand tort de Kant a été de séparer complètement la spéculation et la pratique, la raison de la volonté. Sans la volonté, la raison est toujours formelle. Il s'accorde aussi avec le professeur de Lausanne pour voir dans l'unité de Dieu, non pas un obstacle à la liberté, mais au contraire un auxiliaire". Raymond Saint-Jean, Genèse de L'Action: Blondel 1882-1893, (Desclée de Brouwer, 1965), p. 34. "L'autonomie morale ne se conserve qu'en se convertissant à l'hétéronomie; et le mouvement sujetif et immanent de la volonté se subordonne spontanément à la transcendance d'une loi et d'une destinée absolues..." - 4 mars, 1891, M. Blondel, Carnets Intimes Tome I (1883-1894), (Paris: Cerf, 1961), p. 391. "Ne peut-on désensorceler la pensée du kantisme, comme Kant l'avait fait du cartésianisme, comme Descartes du péripatétisme? Ne peut-on faire du kantisme catholique?" Ibid. p. 105. "Il y a une vérité dans le dualisme qu'établit

Kant entre le domaine de la nécessité scientifique et celui de la liberté morale, mais une vérité autre qu'il ne l'a vue; oui, il y a en nous deux vies ennemies, deux lois en lutte déclarée, et nous admettons en nous la contrariété; cette logique de la contrariété est la logique réelle. L'opposition du phénomène et du noumène se ramène à l'hostilité de la chair et de l'esprit". Ibid., p. 254.

"René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme: La philosophie de l'action et les sciences religieuses (1896-1913), (Paris: Cerf, 1980), pp. 536-539.

"Gregory Baum views Blondel as a turning point in Catholic theology by providing a new approach to Catholic thought. See Chapter One, "The Blondelian Shift", in Gregory Baum, Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience, (New York: A Crossroad Book, The Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 1-35. John J. McNeill writes that Blondel's philosophy of action is "the most powerful presentation of the Augustinian tradition in contemporary philosophy and theology". John J. McNeill, "Blondel on the Subjectivity of Moral Decision Making", Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 45, 1974, 208-217.

"It was in both of these respects - the transcendence of the phenomenal, and the discovery of a foundation for metaphysics in the experiences of the inner self - that Maine de Biran resembled both Jacobi and Fichte and could (in post-Kantian terms) be said to have held that the limits of our knowledge are not identical with the limits of the Understanding. It was through this doctrine that Maine de Biran paved the way for the main stream of anti-positivistic philosophy in France in the nineteenth century". Maurice Mandelbaum, History, Man, and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought, (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 287. Maine de Biran, I may add, was also an influential figure in the area of psychology when psychiatry, in the modern sense, was in its infancy. See Henri F. Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and the Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry, (New York: Basic Books/Harper Torchbooks, 1970), pp. 402-403. Emile Bréhier writes: "La doctrine de Maine de Biran est un des exemples les plus nets de cette sorte d'inversion que la pensée du XVIII^e siècle a subie au XIX^e: l'idéologie condillacienne ne saisissait le pensée humaine que complètement extériorisée dans les sensations et dans leurs signes; Maine de Biran retourne au foyer intérieure unique; les idéologues pratiquaient une seule méthode, l'analyse, pour résoudre des problèmes très multiples; Maine de Biran utilise de multiples méthodes, observations intérieure, physiologie, pathologie, pour résoudre un problème unique, celui de la nature de la

conscience", Emile Bréhier, Histoire de la philosophie III/ XIX^e-XX^e siècles, (Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), pp. 542-543.

⁹Here I argue that the essence of the French 'spiritualist' tradition of de Biran, Ravaisson, Lachelier and Boutroux is found in Blondel's L'Action (1893) whose elements are found in Ricoeur's philosophy of the will and in Nabert's writings. Cf. René Virgoulay, "Réflexion philosophiques et expérience religieuse d'après 'L'Action' de Maurice Blondel et 'Le Désir de dieu' de Jean Nabert", Revue de Sciences Religieuses, 49, 1973, 319-331.

¹⁰Paul Ricoeur, Preface to Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, trans. William J. Petrek, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. XX.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid. p. XXI.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 117.

NOTES: CHAPTER I

¹Emile Brehier, Histoire de la philosophie III, XIX-XX^e siècles, 2^e édition. (Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), p. 567.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. , p.568

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid. , p. 568

⁷Madame de Stael, De l'Allemagne II. La littérature et les arts. (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1968), pp. 127-140. Madame de Stael's admiration for Kant is enormous. Here is an example: "Il faut néanmoins rendre à Kant la justice qu'il mérite même comme écrivain, quand il renonce à son langage scientifique. En parlant des arts, et surtout de la morale, son style est presque toujours parfaitement clair, énergique et simple. Combien sa doctrine paraît alors admirable! Comme il exprime le sentiment du beau et l'amour du devoir! Avec quelle force il les sépare tous les deux de tout calcul d'intérêt ou d'utilité! Comme il ennoblit les actions par leur source et non par leur succès! Enfin, quelle grandeur morale ne sait-il pas donner à l'homme, soit qu'il l'examine en lui-même, soit qu'il considère dans ses rapports extérieurs; l'homme, cet exilé du ciel, ce prisonnier de la terre, si grand, comme exilé, si misérable, comme captif!". Ibid., p. 140.

⁸M. Ferraz, Histoire de la philosophie en France au XIX^e siècle: Spiritualisme et Libéralisme, 2^e édition. (Paris: Perrin et Cie., 1887), pp. 174-75.

⁹Ibid. , p. 180.

¹⁰Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy. Vol. 9, Part I. The Revolution to Henri Bergson, (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1977), p. 57.

¹¹Ferraz writes: "Nommé ... membre du Conseil royal de l'Université et devenu, à ce titre, le directeur suprême de l'enseignement philosophique, il fait subir à cet

enseignement une transformation profonde, qui le met d'un seul coup en harmonie avec les institutions sorties de la Révolution de 89 et avec l'esprit de la société nouvelle. Avant lui, c'est-à-dire sous l'ancien régime et pendant la plus grande partie de la Restauration, la religion catholique, étant considérée comme la religion de l'Etat, l'enseignement de la philosophie affectait plus ou moins le caractère théologique, et les dogmes des livres sacrés s'y mêlaient à plus ou moins forte dose aux théories de la science profane. Ajoutons que cet enseignement se donnait en latin, dans la langue de la scholastique, et que les ecclésiastiques en étaient le plus souvent les dispensateurs et les juges. S'inspirant de l'esprit le principe de la religion d'Etat, avait séculariser l'enseignement de la philosophie. Dès le 21 août, il fait proclamer l'ouverture d'un concours d'Agrégation, pour procurer à la jeunesse des maîtres laïques dignes d'elle et de leur temps. Des le septembre, il fait prendre un arrêté interdisant, soit dans les leçons soit dans l'argumentation, l'emploi de la langue latine, une langue morte ne pouvant exprimer convenablement que des idées mortes et se prêtant difficilement à la transmission de la science vivante. Le programme des cours de philosophie, qui ne put être promulgué qu'en 1832, fut empreint du même caractère.... En même temps que Cousin, en sa qualité de membre du Conseil de l'Université, organisait l'enseignement de la philosophie, il stimulait les recherches philosophiques de ses maîtres les plus distingués par les sujets de prix qu'il donnait, comme président de la section de philosophie, à l'Académie des Sciences morales.... Cousin avait tout ce qu'il fallait pour faire un chef d'école. D'abord, il était doué d'un merveilleux esprit de prosélytisme. Il était encore sur les bancs du collège qu'il s'efforçait déjà de prendre de l'ascendant sur ses camarades et jouait déjà au dominateur des intelligences. Plus tard, il éprouvait tellement le besoin de répandre ses idées qu'il donnait une direction et indiquait des travaux à entreprendre à tous les jeunes gens qui l'approchaient". M. Ferraz, pp. 271-78.

¹²Frederick Copleston, pp. 64-65.

¹³M. Ferraz, p. 186. For an account of Cousin's first encounter with Hegel, see Victor Cousin, Fragments Philosophiques, 5^e édition, (Paris: Aug. Durand, 1866), pp. 63-65.

¹⁴Reardon notes that the Hegelianism of the 1828 volume of the Fragments had undergone some modifications. Bernard Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 184.

¹⁵For a summary of the development of philosophy as

an academic interest see Louis Foucher, La philosophie catholique en France au XIX^e siècle avant la renaissance thomiste et dans son rapport avec elle, 1800-1880, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955), pp. 150-52.

¹⁴Cousin had attended Laromiguière's lectures at the Ecole Normale as well as Royer-Collard's.

¹⁵Georges Boas, French Philosophies of the Romantic Period, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1925), p. 154.

¹⁶Thomas Reid did not come into his own in France until Royer-Collard's expositions. However, for Royer-Collard, Hume did not exist. The devil to be exorcised was Condillac. Boas, p. 155. Of Royer-Collard, Ferraz writes that "il opposa au condillacisme, non les grandes hypothèses spiritualistes de Malebranche et de Leibniz qu'il repoussait tout en les admirant, mais le spiritualisme positif et expérimental de Thomas Reid. Il avait été frappé de la force des arguments que ce dernier avait dirigés contre le sensualisme de Locke, l'idéalisme de Berkeley, le scepticisme de Hume, et avait conçu la pensée de les tourner contre le condillacisme qui contenait, suivant lui, toutes ces erreurs ensemble. Reid s'était surtout occupé de la perception extérieure, parce que Hume et Berkeley, se fondant sur l'idée que Locke s'en était faite, en avaient contesté la valeur. Royer-Collard aborda, à son tour, cette question, qui lui paraissait avoir été mal résolue par Condillac, et consacra presque tout son enseignement à en chercher la vraie solution". M. Ferraz, Spiritualisme et Libéralisme, p. 144.

¹⁷Georges Boas, p. 166.

²⁰"The philosophy of Kant has numerous disciples in and out of the universities. It is evoked upon as full of new conceptions regarding the nature of the understanding of the human mind and capable of giving a new spirit to philosophy which appears to be devoting its meditations to the liberty of peoples", quoted from Moniteur, reprint XXIII, 561, by Boas, p. 166.

²¹Ibid. , p. 167.

²²Ibid. , p. 168.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid. , p. 169.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid. , p. 170.

³¹Ibid. , p. 172.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid. , p. 173.

³⁴Ibid. , p. 174.

³⁵As was Cousin's knowledge of Kant. Cousin cites the authors from which he himself learnt Kant's philosophy: Born, Kant's opera, Lipsae, 4 vol., 1796-97; Kinker, Essai d'une exposition succinte de la critique de la raison pure, traduit du hollandais, par J. le F., Amsterdam, 1801; Ch. Villers, Philosophie de Kant, Metz, 1801; M. de Gérando, Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie, 3 vol., 1804, t. II, p. 167; Ancillon, Mélanges de philosophie et de littérature; Paris, 1803. Victor Cousin, Premiers Essais de Philosophie, 6*, (Paris: Didier et Co., 1873), p. 130. Elsewhere Cousin writes: "J'avais appris assez d'allemand pour vérifier dans le texte de Born qui m'avait le plus frappé; et c'est ainsi que pendant l'année 1817, j'avais pu donner à mes auditeurs quelque idée de la critique de la raison spéculative et de la critique de la raison pratique". Victor Cousin, Fragments philosophiques, p. 47.

³⁶Boas, p. 176. It must be remembered that the ideologists were hostile to the restoration of religion and de Tracy viewed theology as the philosophy of the world's childhood. E. Bréhier, Histoire de la philosophie, p. 530.

³⁷Destutt de Tracy, "De la métaphysique de Kant", Mem. de l'Inst. Science Morale et Politique, IV, p. 547, quoted in Boas, p. 178.

³⁸Ghislain de Diesbach, Madame de Stael, (Paris: Perrin, 1983), pp. 278-84. De Diesbach points out that Madame de Stael's initiation into Kant was through the English Kantian scholar, Henry Crabb Robinson who was invited for her at Weimar by the Director of the Gymnasium at Weimar. Robinson had studied Schelling at the University of Jena and had already published on Kant. Ibid. , pp. 297-98.

²⁰Madame de Staël, De l'Allemagne II, (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1968), p. 187; pp. 197-98; pp. 202-03. See Ferraz, p. 11.

⁴⁰Boas, p. 181.

⁴¹Ibid. p. 182.

⁴²Ibid. p. 183.

⁴³Ibid. p. 183.

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 184.

⁴⁵Ibid. p. 185.

⁴⁶Ibid. pp. 186-87.

⁴⁷V. Cousin, Fragments philosophiques, préface de la première édition de 1826, p. 1.

⁴⁸Boas, p. 188.

⁴⁹Cousin maintained, that, by showing the downcast kind of moral and political viewpoints that come out of the metaphysics of sensation, the Scottish philosophy, a sane metaphysics, would, in reverse, lead to an aesthetic, a theodicy and a morality and politics which would satisfy the human spirit. Victor Cousin, Philosophie Ecossaise, (Paris: Michel Levy, 1854), p. 11.

⁵⁰Cousin, Fragments, p. 149.

⁵¹Boas, p. 191. Louis Foucher, La philosophie catholique, p. 153.

⁵²Cousin, "Avertissement de la troisième édition", in Fragments, p. LXXXI.

⁵³By M. Grimblot. Ibid., p. LXXXI.

⁵⁴Schelling had also been presented to the scientific public by the long and detailed "History of Natural Sciences" begun by Cuvier and completed by T. Magdalene de Saint-Agy, Boas, pp. 192-93.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 194.

⁵⁶Cousin took over the chair of Royer-Collard when he was 23 years old and at the same time directed philosophy at the Ecole Normale.

=>Boas, p. 198. Bernard Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, p. 182.

=>V. Cousin, Discours Politiques, 6^e édition, (Paris: Didier, 1851), pp. IV-V.

=>Boas, p. 199.

=>Ibid., p. 200.

=>Ibid., p. 205.

=>Ibid., p. 206.

=>V. Cousin, Premiers essais de philosophie, 6^e édition, (Paris: Didier, 1873), pp. 305-13.

=>"C'est une grande question de savoir si l'esprit humain commence par l'une ou par l'autre". Ibid., pp. 312-13.

=>Especially to Royer-Collard.

=>Spiritualist philosophy teaches the spirituality of the soul, the freedom and responsibility of human action, moral obligation and so forth, and beyond the limits of the world it shows a creative God. These elements will develop all the way into Blondel by way of Ravaisson, Lachelier and Boutroux. It can be said that the spiritualist philosophy goes back to Maine de Biran which centers on the 'I am' of Descartes' famous dictum. See Jean Guittou, Regards sur la pensée française, 1870-1940, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1968), pp. 68-69. See also Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9 Part II, pp. 177-78. The clearest statement of the spiritualistic eclecticism is in the three prefaces of Cousin's Fragments. See Bréhier, Histoire de la philosophie, p. 579.

=>Boas, p. 211.

=>Ibid., p. 212.

=>Ibid., p. 213.

=>"Qui sans doute l'Allemagne est une grande école de philosophie; il faut l'étudier et la bien connaître, mais il ne faut pas s'y assujettir. La nouvelle philosophie française, s'il m'est donné de lui servir de guide après M. Royer-Collard, ne cherchera pas plus ses inspirations en Allemagne qu'en Angleterre ...", Victor Cousin, Fragments philosophiques, Philosophie contemporaine 5^e éd. (Paris:

Dider, Durand, 1866), p. 218.

⁷¹There is almost no Descartes in Cousin. He is willing to admit that what he took from Royer-Collard, the latter took from Reid. Cousin's account of the idea of causality and substance is from de Biran. See Boas, p. 214.

⁷²Boas, pp. 215-16.

⁷³Ibid., p. 216.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 217.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 219.

⁷⁶Alexandre Koyré, Etudes d'histoire de la pensée philosophique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 226.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Here were the basic French translations of Hegel: La Logique subjective de Hegel, trad. Sloman & J. Wallon, Paris, 1854; Logique de Hegel, trad. A. Vera, Paris, 1859, 2^e éd. 1874; Philosophie de la nature, trad. A. Vera, Paris, 1863-66; Philosophie de l'esprit, trad. A. Vera, Paris, 1867-69; Esthétique, trad. Ch. Benard, Paris, 2^e, 1869-78; Philosophie de la religion, trad. A. Vera, Paris, 1876-78. Earlier Hegel was known through these secondary sources: Barchou de Penhoen, Histoire de la philosophie allemande, 2 vol., Paris, 1836; J. Willm, Essai sur la philosophie de Hegel, Strasbourg, 1856; A. Ott, Hegel et la philosophie allemande ou exposé et examen critique des principaux systèmes de la philosophie allemande depuis Kant et spécialement de celui de Hegel, Paris, 1844; L. Prévost, Hegel, exposition de sa doctrine, Paris, 1844; A. Vera, Introduction à la philosophie de Hegel, Strasbourg, 1855; articles by Emile Saisset in Revue des Deux mondes (Fev. 1846, mars 1856, déc. 1860 and E. Scherer, fév., 1861, Revue des Deux Mondes; Foucher de Careil, Hegel et Schopenhauer, Paris, 1862; Paul Janet, Etudes sur la dialectique dans Platon et dans Hegel, Paris, 1861; A. Weber, Introduction historique à la philosophie hegelienne, Strasbourg, 1866. This list is given in Koyré, p. 226.

⁷⁹S.I.M. Du Plessis, The Compatibility of Science and Philosophy in France 1840-1940, Cape Town: Balkema, 1972), pp. 46- 53.

⁸⁰Koyré, p. 227

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²We note that the translations of Fichte appeared in 1836, 1843 and 1845 while Schelling's works appeared in 1842, 1845, 1847 and 1851. Also, Barni translated, under the suggestion of Cousin, Kant's Critique of Judgement in 1846; Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals in 1848 and the Critique of Pure Reason in 1869 (previously translated by Tissot in 1835-36. Barni also published his own Examen des fondements de la metaphysique des moeurs et la raison pratique in 1851. In addition, articles on German thought appeared in many journals. Hence, French intellectual life was bombarded with Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Herder, Schopenhauer, Creuzer, Bournouf, Strauss, Goethe, Holderlin, Feuerbach and so forth. It is true to say that the impact of English thought seemed less important to the French although knowledge of Mill and Carlyle added to the discussions. See D.G. Charlton, Positivist thought in France during the Second Empire, 1852-1870, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 14.

⁸³Koyré, pp. 230-31.

⁸⁴For a full view of this see Kenneth R. Stunkel, "India and the Idea of a Primitive Revelation in French Neo-Catholic Thought", in The Journal Of Religious History, Vol. 8, 1974-75, pp. 228-239.

⁸⁵It is ironic that the denial of God coincided with the search for an absolute in many forms throughout the nineteenth-century. For comments on this see Hans Georg Schenk, "Le Romantisme et la Déchristianisation de l'Europe", in Romantisme et Religion: théologie des théologiens et théologie des écrivains, Actes de Colloque interdisciplinaire à Metz, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), pp. 115-16.

⁸⁶The nineteenth-century witnessed a tremendous growth in oriental scholarship. Scholars that come to mind are Chézy, Langlais, Fauche and above all Eugene Bournouf (1801-52), who was the teacher of Littré, Renan, Ampère and Barthélemy-Sainte Hilaire. See D.G. Charlton, Secular Religions in France, 1815-1870, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 144-54.

⁸⁷For example, do the recent discoveries in Egypt by Champollion confirm the Biblical accounts of the Exodus? Does geology and comparative philology confirm the Book of Genesis and the theory of a single and original tradition? etc... were pertinent questions William Marshall Horton, The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain, (New York: New York University Press, 1926), p. 31. See Harry Paul, "In Quest of Kerygma: Catholic Intellectual Life in Nineteenth-Century France", The American Historical Review, Vol. 75, No. 2,

1969, p. 395. For an account of the Biblical issues, see Charles Wackenheim, "Science et Foi: Un exemple de concordisme au XIX^e siècle", Revue des Sciences Religieuses, Vol. 54, No. 2, 1980, pp. 153-163. For an interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis in the nineteenth century see Robert Couffignal, "L'interprétation 'romantique' des premiers chapitres de la genèse biblique", in Romantisme et Religion, pp. 125-30.

⁸²W.M. Horton, The Philosophy of the Abbe Bautain, p. 32. Horton calls Bautain one of the grandparents of French catholic Modernism, p. 296. Elsewhere he states that Bautain was a "modernist before the modernists"; p. 95.

⁸³Horton., p. 34.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁸⁵Horton maintains that Bautain's aversion to scholasticism was due to the inability of scholasticism to meet and refute pantheism. Ibid., p. 247. "Ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui Philosophie scolastique n'est point, à proprement dire, un corps de doctrine, un système de science: c'est surtout une méthode logique, un procédé dialectique pour discerner et réfuter l'erreur, plus que pour découvrir la vérité. Cet enseignement n'a rien de commun avec les systèmes modernes; ceux qui le donnent, ou ne les connaissent point, ou ne voulant point s'en occuper. Il est resté au dix-neuvième siècle à peu près ce qu'il était au dix-septième; et c'est un spectacle singulier, au milieu du progrès général des connaissances humaines, de voir la Philosophie scolastique garder ses anciennes allures, son vieux langage, ses formes usées, ne marchant point avec le siècle, ne voulant se mêler en aucune manière avec lui, bien qu'au fond elle participe à son esprit plus qu'elle ne croit: car, tout en gardant les formes et le langage du moyen âge, elle n'en a plus la foi, ni la science. Elle est Cartésienne, dans son esprit, et c'est ce qui explique sa sécheresse et sa stérilité". Louis Bautain, "De l'enseignement de la philosophie en France, au dix-neuvième siècle", Discours Préliminaire in Psychologie expérimentale, (Strasbourg/Paris: Derivaux/Lagny Frères, 1839), pp. XXXVIII-XXXIX. See also Gerald A. McCool, Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth-Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), p. 53.

⁸⁶The main currents in German Catholic thought around 1833 were the 18th-century rationalism modified by Kant which was predominant at Freiburg and Bonn, the Romanticist tendency at Munich and to a lesser degree at Tübingen and Vienna and finally, the ultramontanist tendency with neo-scholastic philosophy at Mayence and Strasbourg. See

Thomas F. O'Meara, Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians, (Notre Dame, London, University of Notre Dame Press, 1882), pp. 1-15. Wayne L. Fehr, The Birth of the Catholic Tübingen School: The Dogmatics of Johann Sebastian Drey, (American Academy of Religion Series, 37: Scholars Press, 1981), pp. 1-2.

Bautain's conclusions are as follows: "La consequence du systeme de la sensation c'est le materialisme; car l'homme ne peut connaître que ce qui frappe ses sens. S'il n'est lui-même dans toutes ses facultés qu'une sensation transformée, il ne doit aimer, vouloir et rechercher que ce qui est sensible, et ainsi la jouissance des choses matérielles est le moyen et le but de son perfectionnement. La théorie écossaise, enfermant l'homme dans sa conscience pour s'observer lui-même dans les opérations de son esprit, lui ôtant toute croyances en ce qu'il peut constater par l'expérience, le déshéritant des traditions des siècles et des lumières de tous les temps, le conduit nécessairement à un rationalisme mesquin et individuel dont la morale sera l'égoïsme réfléchi, et la religion un vague déisme. L'éclecticisme, envisagé d'une manière large et profonde, comme le veut le chef de l'école actuelle, n'est qu'un panthéisme plus intellectuel que celui de Spinoza. C'est l'aboutissant de la philosophie allemande, de la philosophie dite de la nature: c'est l'idéalisme des anciens renouvelé, où tout s'unit, se confond et s'évanouit dans un je ne sais quoi, qui n'est ni dieu ni homme, ni esprit ni matière, ni objectif ni subjectif, ni vérité ni illusion, ni lumière ni ténèbres, ni bien ni mal, mais l'indifférence pure et absolue entre toutes ces choses". Louis Bautain, Philosophie du Christianisme, Tome second, (reprint, Frankfurt: Minerva, 1967), pp. 41-42. Paul Poupard, Un Essai de philosophie chrétienne au XIX^e siècle, L'Abbé Louis Bautain, (Tournai: Desclée et Cie., 1961), pp. 70-71. Also, Horton, p. 57.

Horton, p. 57. Reardon, p. 121. "Cette doctrine, ou plutôt cette manière d'étudier l'homme, d'origine étrangère, comme son nom l'indique, a été importée en France par un homme d'une raison forte, d'un sens droit, et qui jouit d'une grande autorité dans nos affaires publiques. C'est dans une chaire de la faculté de Paris que les opinions de Reid et de Dugald Stewart ont été d'abord exposées, et c'est par quelques élèves de l'école normale que cet enseignement s'est étendue". Louis Bautain, "De l'enseignement de la philosophie en France", in Psychologie, pp. XXI-XXII.

"Behind the Fichtean ethics and epistemology, and behind the whole philosophy of German Romanticism, there lurks that conception of an irresistible life-force, spontaneously gushing up both in Nature and in man, to which

a modern Romanticist has given the name of élan vital. Its ethical corollary, the idea that within the Ego pulsate forces which cannot, ought not, be restrained by any external barrier or external authority, and that the mechanical conception of Nature, the Romantic conception of Nature as animate and organic appealed strongly to Bautain". Horton, p. 104.

*Ibid. , p. 62,

"Ce fut pendant sa maladie qu'il perdit cette confiance en soi-même et cet orgueil de la vie qui fait les chercheurs indépendants et les philosophes. Il tomba dans cet état de prostration et de découragement, que le fondateur de la Société de Jésus demandait à ceux qu'il voulait ramener à la religion, et qui implique, avec la conscience de sa propre faiblesse, le besoin de trouver au dehors une force et un point d'appui qu'on ne trouve pas au dedans de soi". M. Ferraz, Traditionalisme et Ultramontanisme, p. 318.

"Jusque-là habitué au bruit et aux applaudissements qui entouraient ses brillants succès, le professeur se retrouva seul, face à lui-même, incapable de penser et de réfléchir. Lui qui, depuis des années, vivait dans la conviction de la puissance illimitée de la raison comme faculté de l'absolu, éprouva brutalement son impuissance". Paul Poupard, p. 86. See also Horton, p. 64.

"Sous cette influence féminine et presque maternelle, et sous celle d'un milieu tout chrétien auquel il ne demandait pas mieux que de s'accommoder, le jeune malade ouvrit l'Évangile et éprouva bientôt, comme un grand spiritualiste du XVIII^e siècle, mais d'une manière plus efficace et plus durable que le saint livre parlait à son cœur. Cet esprit saturé d'abstractions et fatigué de la multiplicité des systèmes, savoura avec délices ces pures doctrines qui peuvent être l'aliment des forts, comme celui des faibles, tant elles sont bien appropriées à tous les besoins de l'homme. La foi se substitua chez lui à la raison, la religion à la philosophie". M. Ferraz, Traditionalisme et Ultramontanisme, p. 320.

Horton writes that Mlle. Humann brought Bautain in contact with "the ancient tradition of Christian mysticism, which goes back through Boehme, Eckhart, and Scotus Erigena to pseudoDionysios and the Alexandrian fathers - and through them, finally, to Philo and the Platonic tradition. Mingled with theosophic, occultistic, and Cabalistic tendencies, this ancient mystical tradition was just then exerting a most powerful influence upon all of the philosophers of France and Germany. It was mediated partly by the philosophy of Jacob Boehme, which enjoyed an unheard-of popularity throughout the epoch of Romanticism, and partly by more classical sources

such as neo-Platonism. Sound deeply enough in the philosophy of Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, or even Hegel, and you will strike mysticism; but far more mystical than the philosophy of such men was the popular philosophy of the day - and it was from this secondary stratum ... represented by men like Jacobi in Protestant circles and men like Franz Baader in Catholic circles, that Mlle. Humann drew her leading ideas". Horton, p. 71.

¹⁰⁰"To Bautain, philosophy always meant philosophy of life. No longer could he exalt the powers of the human reason, the autonomy of the will, and the rights of the individual: the nightmare of melancholia had destroyed his confidence in the natural capacities of man; and, if he was in the future to find anything on which to base his thinking and rest his confidence, it must be something surer than his own uncertain reason, something steadier than his own wavering will". Horton, p. 65.

¹⁰¹Ibid. , p. 66.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid. , pp. 67-68.

¹⁰⁴Ibid. , p. 71.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. , p. 72

¹⁰⁶Ibid. , p. 74. Poupard, p. 103. Reardon, p. 119.

¹⁰⁷Horton, p. 75.

¹⁰⁸Bautain clearly denied the discursive reason of the scholastics. Reason, independent and prior to faith, was not valid in Bautain's estimate. When Bautain wrote this up there was an uproar and a controversy with Mgr. Trévern ensued. For the condemnation of Bautain by Church officials and what followed see Horton, pp. 89-97. Also, reardon, p. 123-24. Like Kant, Bautain removed reason to make way for faith. Poupard, pp. 173-77. For a fuller treatment of the controversy with Mgr. Trévern, see Poupard, pp. 181-226.

¹⁰⁹McCool, p. 48.

¹¹⁰Horton, p. 144.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid. , p. 145. Louis Bautain, L'esprit humain

et ses facultés, Tome II, (Paris: Didier et Cie., 1859), pp. 17-19.

¹¹⁴Horton, p. 145.

¹¹⁵Bautain, L'esprit humaine, pp. 20-21. Horton, p. 152.

¹¹⁶Bautain, p. 24. Horton, p. 155.

¹¹⁷Bautain, p. 26. Horton, p. 126. "En réagissant vers l'objet extérieur qui l'impressionne, l'esprit tend à sortir de lui pour se poser dans l'objet, en même temps qu'il reçoit et absorbe ce que l'objet pose en lui. Il y a là deux mouvements inverses et simultanés qui constituent le procédé vital de l'esprit, comme celui de toute existence animée. Par sa tendance au dehors ou l'activité d'expansion, l'esprit se développe et s'accroît. Par le retour au dedans, effet de la force de concentration, il est ramené sur lui-même pour assimiler ce qu'il a reçu. C'est l'origine de la réflexion qui pose la conscience et produit la connaissance. La connaissance se forme dans le moi; elle se moule, se formule dans la subjectivité, et ainsi elle dépend à la fois du sujet qui la conçoit et de l'objet qui l'engendre". Louis Bautain, Psychologie expérimentale, Tome deuxième, p. 428.

¹¹⁸Bautain, Psychologie expérimentale, I, p. 346. Horton, p. 148.

¹¹⁹Horton, p. 157.

¹²⁰Ibid. Bautain, Psychologie expérimentale, II, pp. 158- 61. "L'objet et l'aliment de la foi sont les vérités révélées, déposées dans les Ecritures, conservées, transmises d'âge en âge, enseignées par l'Eglise, et que nous apprenons par ses soins, comme l'enfant apprend la langue maternelle dans les bras et sur le sein de sa mère. Cette parole sacrée donne à l'homme la conscience de sa nature véritable Dieu est l'auteur de la foi; les vérités révélées sont l'objet de notre foi, et l'enseignement de l'Eglise en est la règle". Louis Bautain, Philosophie du Christianisme, Tome premier, p. 318.

¹²¹Horton, p. 157.

¹²²Ibid. , p. 158.

¹²³Ibid. , p. 159.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵"... l'esprit inférieur, posé par la nature

physique sous l'influence des agents qui lui sont/analogues et dont la manifestation la plus brillant est l'imagination; l'esprit supérieur, posé par le développement de la nature psychique dont la première puissance est l'intelligence; et enfin l'esprit moyen ou mixte, qui résulte de l'équilibre des deux, ou la raison. L'intelligence et la raison sont donc des facultés distinctes de l'esprit humain". Louis Bautain, Psychologie expérimentale, II, pp. 487-88. "Les produits de ces facultés sont divers come leurs actes. D'un côté ce sont les idées, types ou reflets dans l'entendement de ce qui est, des choses véritables et éternelles agissant sur l'âme humaine au moyen de la lumière intelligible. Les idées sont pour la science ce que les idéaux, qu'elles représentent, sont pour les existences réelles, principes, bases radicales, plastiques purs. Elles se produisent en nous avec une certitude absolue, fruit de l'évidence la plus complète ou du sentiment le plus intime. C'est la certitude métaphysique. De l'autre côté, ce sont les notions abstraites et les opinions, systèmes et théories qui en proviennent; partie contingente et variable de la connaissance, toujours relative aux faits, à l'observation des faits ou aux principes de la démonstration". Psychologie expérimentale II, p. 489. Horton, p. 160.

120 "L'intelligence est plus ou moins pure, plus ou moins lumineuse, selon les objets vers lesquels l'homme tourne habituellement son regard et son amour. Elle est toujours le rayon visuel de l'âme, et comme tel, l'instrument nécessaire de toute science et de toute connaissance. Mais ce rayon se dirige d'abord par les sens et leurs organes vers les objets sensibles, vers le monde des corps où l'homme vit de la vie animale. Plus tard l'homme se replie sur lui-même et se crée en lui un monde spirituel où il vit de la vie réflexive, en être raisonnable. Plus tard encore, il abandonne de gré ou de force le monde factice de sa raison propre; et heureux alors s'il s'élève vers la lumière intelligible, pour redevenir par elle plus purement intelligent! Les théories platoniciennes de la réminiscence et de la purification expriment le retour de l'âme aux idées, ou le détournement de son regard des choses qui passent, pour le diriger vers celles qui ne passent point. C'est la transition de la vision organique à la contemplation". Louis Bautain, Psychologie expérimentale, II, pp. 489-90. See Horton, p. 161; McCool, pp. 48-49; Poupard, p. 270.

¹²⁷Horton, p. 161. Poupard, p. 259.

¹²⁸Horton, p. 161.

¹²⁹"La raison naturellement active, puisqu'elle discerne et compare, est la faculté mathématique: l'entendement passif de sa nature est la forme philosophique: l'intelligence passive et active à la fois est la puissance métaphysique. Or, si vous prétendez comprendre mathématiquement, ou saisir par la raison ce qui n'est évident qu'à l'intelligence, vous saisirez des fantômes et vous en déduirez logiquement des absurdités, des impiétés". Louis Bautain, Philosophie du Christianisme I, p. 339. Horton, p. 162.

¹³⁰Poupard, in a footnote makes a remark on behalf of Bautain that anticipates Blondel: "Et Bautain oppose longuement la France réaliste à l'Allemagne idéaliste, en souhaitant que l'union de ces deux types d'esprit fournisse au XIX^e siècle la vraie philosophie de la connaissance", p. 261, n. 2. See Horton, p. 162.

¹³¹This emergent synergistic spirituality of the organism, a central feature in the philosophies of Ravaisson and Boutroux, including Bautain, were indebted to Maine de Biran.

¹³²McCool, p. 50.

¹³³Horton, p. 168.

¹³⁴This is Bautain's own analogy. Horton, p. 170.

¹³⁵Horton, p. 177.

¹³⁶"Le génie est plus que le talent: c'est la puissance la plus haute de l'intelligence Le génie est le flambeau de la science et du progrès de l'humanité", Louis Bautain, L'Esprit Humain et ses facultés, Tome II, (Paris: Didier, 1839), p. 336. Bautain also writes: "Le génie est supérieur au talent. Dans le talent il y a aperçu de l'idée, un reflet vague de l'idéal, et ainsi il est plutôt dirigé par un sentiment obscur que par une vue nette et complète de ce qui convient. Dans le génie il y a conception, enfantement de l'idée, et par conséquent de l'unité, de l'universalité de l'infini, comme partout où une idée divine tend à se réaliser", L. Bautain, L'Esprit Humain, p. 341. See Horton, pp. 182-83.

¹³⁷Bautain accepted the Bonaldian theory of a verbal primitive revelation. See Philosophie du Christianisme II p. 318-319.

¹³⁹McCool, p. 52.

¹³⁹McCool has this to say: "Bautain was not a strict traditionalist like Lamennais. As an Augustinian ontologist he believed that the divine ideas manifested themselves to reflective intelligence and provided the evidence needed for certain knowledge. Society was indispensable, however, for the speculative and moral education of reflected intelligence, and society educated its members through tradition. Knowledge was not acquired by abstracting ideas from sensible reality by the individual Aristotelian 'reason'. Knowledge was acquired by a reflective clarification of the ideas passively received through 'faith' from the tradition of an educating society". Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth-Century, p. 52. Other important traditionalists that followed are listed by Ferraz as Bonnetty in France, Ubachs in Belgium; Cortès in Spain and Ventura in Italy. Traditionalisme et Ultramontanisme, pp. 345-55.

¹⁴⁰Reardon, p. 137.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Foucher writes that under the influence of Bautain, "deux courants nouveaux reviendront à une position plus normale de la pensée catholique, celui de l'ontologisme de langue française et celui créé par Gratry et ferment à son tour, après la restauration thomiste, dans l'oeuvre d'un Ollé-Laprune, d'un Blondel, d'un Laberthonnière. On peut même, on doit apercevoir un lien plus large encore entre certaines intuitions de Bautain et plusieurs grands thèmes de la philosophie du XIX^e siècle: le rôle donné à la croyance et à la liberté dans la connaissance par Lequier et Renouvier, l'évolution créatrice de Bergson, la phénoménologie de Husserl". Louis Foucher, La Philosophie Catholique en France au XIX^e siècle, p. 98. See McCool, p. 54.

¹⁴³On Gratry's debt to Bautain, see Reardon, p. 192; Horton, p. 287-88. Also see Foucher, p. 201-202.

¹⁴⁴Reardon, p. 142.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. , p. 192.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Reardon, pp. 192-93. Ferraz, pp. 374-75.

¹⁴⁸The opening question of Blondel's L'Action (1893) concerns whether man has a destiny.

¹⁴⁹Ferraz, p. 375.

¹⁵⁰For a summary of the polemics see Reardon, pp. 193-94. The controversy centered on the Hegelian Vacherot's critical history of the school of Alexandria.

¹⁵¹Reardon, p. 195.

¹⁵²Ferraz, p. 379. Reardon, p. 195.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Gratry cites Plato as establishing the existence of God by going from the imperfect to the perfect, from the finite to the infinite. Ferraz, p. 380.

¹⁵⁵Reardon, p. 195. Ferraz, p. 380.

¹⁵⁶Here the influence of Bautain manifests itself.

¹⁵⁷Reardon, p. 197. Ferraz, p. 390.

¹⁵⁸Reardon, p. 197.

¹⁵⁹A. Gratry, Logique, Tome Premier, 4^e édition, (Paris: Charles Douniol; J. Lecoffre, 1858), p. 111. Ferraz, p. 396. Foucher, p. 205.

¹⁶⁰Gratry, Logique II, pp. 112-114. Of Hegel, Gratry writes: "Ce sophiste résume en lui la sophistication de tous les siècles, et y ajoute la tranquille audace de systématiser l'absurde et d'avouer cette entreprise devant les hommes, hautement et décidément", Logique II, pp. 104-105. Ferraz, pp. 397-98. Foucher, p. 216.

¹⁶¹According to Gratry, Hegel's position is "athéisme pour le fond, et panthéisme par la forme", Logique II, p. 132. Ferraz, p. 402.

¹⁶²Ferraz, p. 405.

¹⁶³Gratry points out that the other process of reason as opposed to syllogism, "nommé par Platon Dialectique, et quelques fois aussi par Aristote, qui le nomme plus souvent Induction, est appliqué par Hegel précisément à rebours", Logique II, p. 177. Ferraz, p. 398.

¹⁶⁴Gratry, in Logique II views the dialectic or induction from the point of view of Plato and Aristotle (pp. 135) and examines Royer-Collard's views on the method (pp. 36-57) as it is applied by Kepler (pp. 58-86) and Leibnitz (pp. 87-117) and as applied in geometry (pp. 118-168). See

Ferraz, pp. 406407.

* 145 Reardon, pp. 198-99. "...ceux qui vivent par le ventre; ceux qui vivent par le cerveau et ceux qui vivent par le coeur". Ferraz, p. 413.

146 Reardon, p. 166.

147 Ibid. Ferraz, p. 425.

148 Reardon, p. 199.

149 Ibid. , p. 200.

NOTES: CHAPTER II

¹Raymond St. Jean, Genèse de l'Action, Blondel (1882-1895), Desclee de Brouwer, 1965), pp. 27-37.

²Here I am referring to the antinomie of the spirit and the letter. Duméry, however has characterized Blondel's spiritualism under three antinomies: "l'unité fondamentale/multiplicité évidente; réalisation de soi/méthode de suppression; l'assujettissement à la pratique littérale/l'inaliénable liberté de l'âme. The paradox of the spirit and the letter refers to Duméry's third antinomie however. Henry Duméry, La Tentation de faire du Bien, (Paris: Seuil, 1956), pp. 218-236.

³Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 67.

⁴Ibid. , p. 68.

⁵Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9 Part I, p. 104.

⁶E. Caro, (1826-1887), professor of philosophy, defender of Christian theism, was the teacher of Ollé-Laprune. See Reardon, p. 208. Also, Du Plessis, p. 34.

⁷Auguste Comte, Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings, Ed. and introd. Gertrud Lenzer, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 75.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid. , p. 76.

¹⁰Copleston, p. 123.

¹¹Ibid. , p. 129.

¹²"Dieu ne fait pas d'apparitions dans le monde que nous mesurons et observons; mais on ne peut prouver qu'il n'en fasse pas dans l'infini du temps", Ernest Renan, "Examen de conscience philosophique", Revue des Deux Mondes, 1889, reprinted in Renan: Histoire et Parole, Oeuvres diverses, choix de textes, introd. et commentaires de Landyce Rétat, (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1984), p. 820.

¹³Bernard M. G. Reardon, Religion in the Age of Romanticism: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Thought, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 237-266. "Il y a donc chez Renan comme un conflit entre une conscience intellectuelle qui se plie aux méthodes des sciences positives et ses aspirations romantiques". Emile Bréhier, Histoire de la philosophie III. p. 813.

¹⁴Ibid. , pp. 814-815.

¹⁵Copleston, p. 134. Comte's attraction for Spinoza and Hegel, I may add, had preceded his positivist ideas.

¹⁶Copleston, p. 139.

¹⁷D. G. Charlton, Secular Religions, p. 203. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Part II, p. 155.

¹⁸Cournot was the first to apply probability in mathematics to philosophy. Du Plessis, p. 23; pp. 171-72.

¹⁹Charlton, p. 204. Copleston, pp. 157-58.

²⁰Charlton, p. 204.

²¹Renouvier concludes that "s'il existe des choses en soi, indépendamment de toute représentation, ces choses nous sont inconnues, ne sont rien pour le savoir, rien pour nous, et que, en conséquence, il n'existe que des représentations. Je dis des représentations et non mes représentations ou les représentation à moi, puisque j'ignore encore ce que c'est à vrai dire que moi; Je dis mieux des phénomènes, ou des choses en tant que représentantes et représentées, car la chose exclue comme en soi reparaît comme phénomène ou nous parlons des choses ... en tant qu'elles représentent et sont représentées, ou nous parlons des choses en tant qu'elles ont de tout autres rapports ou qu'elles n'en ont aucun; mais en tant qu'elles représentent et sont représentées, les choses se confondent avec les représentations; et en tant qu'elles ont de tout autres rapports ou qu'elles n'en ont aucun, elles n'apparaissent pas et sont comme n'étant pas; donc les choses sont des phénomènes quant à la connaissance, et les phénomènes sont les choses". Charles Renouvier, Essais de Critique Générale. Premier Essai: Analyse générale de la connaissance bornes de la connaissance, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique de Ladrange, 1854), pp. 42-43. Du Plessis, p. 44. see also Ch. Renouvier, Traité de Logique Générale et de Logique Formelle, Tome Premier, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1912), pp. 59-60.

²²Charlton, p. 208.

²³Du Plessis, p. 45.

²⁴we can maintain with some assurance that Renouvier's philosophy is a philosophy of choice, of the will. For Renouvier, the essential faculty of the mind is not reason but the will, hence, the fundamental issue is not the problem of knowledge but the problem of belief, of certitude. Again, in a most basic way, then, the essence of man is action and affirmation, not thought. See Jean Guilton, Regards sur la pensée française, 1870-1940, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1968), p. 72.

²⁵Charlton, p. 208.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Roger Verneaux, Histoire de la Philosophie Contemporaine, Onzième Edition, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), pp. 63- 71. Paul Archambault, Renouvier, (Paris: Librairie Blond, 1911), pp. 15-21.

²⁸"L'esprit comme le cœur a ses idoles. L'idolâtrie de la pensée, l'idolâtrie de la matière, l'idolâtrie du temps, l'idolâtrie de l'espace, l'idolâtrie de la substance qui a volonté les contient toutes, composent le fond légèrement varié d'une religion à l'usage des philosophes, religion primitive assez comparable au fétichisme des peuples en enfance; et presque toute la philosophie n'est que idéologie. Sans doute, on ne peut sans quelque trouble se sentir conduit par la logique à rejeter un espace en soi, une matière en soi; car l'autorité de la coutume est grande. Mais on se rassure en songeant que les motifs d'affirmer ces sortes de substances sont les mêmes qui ont fait aux uns, poser des idées en soi, aux autres, des forces pures, à ceux-ci, des monades, à ceux-là, des atomes, et puis, des qualités réelles, des espèces intentionnelles, des formes substantielles, des formes plastiques, et des âmes au nombre de trois ou quatre espèces. On se rassure surtout lorsque après avoir banni la méthode idéologique, on voit les éléments naturels de la sciences, apparaître et se classer d'eux-mêmes". Charles Renouvier, Essais de Critique Générale, Premier Essai, p. 44

²⁹Ibid. ; pp. 262-265.

³⁰Charlton, p. 208.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Bréhier, pp. 851-52.

³⁴Charlton, pp. 208-09.

³⁵Ibid. , p. 209.

³⁶Jean Guittou writes that the French 'spiritualist' tradition is conserved by those thinkers who describe the interior experience, a spiritual itinerary, as it were. It is not a system but an experience is the foundation of such a tradition that rightly begins with Maine de Biran. See Jean Guittou, p. 70.

³⁷Bréhier, p. 871.

³⁸Copleston, p. 179.

³⁹Bréhier, p. 871. Copleston, p. 179.

⁴⁰Ravaisson, De l'habitude, nouvelle édition, introd. Jean Baruzi, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1957), p. 35.

⁴¹Ibid. , pp. 38-39.

⁴²Copleston, p. 179.

⁴³Ibid. , p. 180.

⁴⁴Dominique Janicaud, Une généalogie du spiritualisme française: aux sources bergsonisme: Ravaisson et la métaphysique, (Le Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 117.

⁴⁵"Entre le ~~le~~ dernier fonds de la nature et le plus haut point de la liberté réflexive, il y a une infinité de degrés qui mesurent les développements d'une seule et même puissance, et à mesure qu'on s'élève, à mesure aussi augmente, avec la distinction et l'intervalle des contraires, l'entendue, condition de la science. C'est comme une spirale dont le principe réside dans la profondeur de la nature, et qui achève de s'épanouir dans la conscience. C'est cette spirale que l'habitude redescend, et dont elle nous enseigne la génération et l'origine". Ravaisson, De L'Habitude, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁶"Toute la suite des êtres n'est donc que la progression continue des puissances successives d'un seul et même principe, qui s'enveloppent les uns les autres dans la hiérarchie des formes de la vie, qui se développent en sens inverse dans le progrès de l'habitude. La limite inférieure est la nécessité, le Destin, si l'on veut, mais dans la

spontanéité de la Nature: la limite supérieure, la Liberté de l'entendement. L'habitude descend de l'une à l'autre: elle rapproche ces contraires, et en les rapprochant, elle en dévoile l'essence intime et la nécessaire connexion". Ravaisson, De l'Habitude, p. 49. See Jacques Chevalier, Histoire de la pensée IV. La pensée moderne de Hegel à Bergson, (Paris: Flammarion, 1966), pp. 42526.

⁴⁷Ravaisson writes that "l'histoire de l'Habitude représente le retour de la Liberté à la Nature, ou plutôt l'invasion du domaine de la liberté par la spontanéité naturelle". De l'Habitude, p. 59. Chevalier, p. 435.

⁴⁸"Dans la réflexion et la volonté, la fin du mouvement est une idée, un idéal à accomplir, quelque chose qui doit être, qui peut être, et qui n'est pas encore. C'est une possibilité à réaliser. Mais à mesure que la fin se confond avec le mouvement et le mouvement avec la tendance, la possibilité, l'idéal s'y réalise. L'idée devient être, l'être même et tout l'être du mouvement et de la tendance qu'elle détermine. L'habitude est plus en plus une idée substantielle. L'intelligence obscure qui succède par l'habitude où l'objet et le sujet sont confondus, c'est une intuition réelle, où se confondent le réel et l'idéal. l'être et la pensée". Ravaisson, De l'Habitude, p. 35. Elsewhere Ravaisson writes that "c'est la cause finale qui prédomine de plus sur la cause efficiente et qui absorbe en soi. Et alors, en effet, la fin et le principe, le fait et la loi, se confondent dans la nécessité". Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁹Guittou, p. 87.

⁵⁰Bréhier, p. 873.

⁵¹Jules Lachelier, "The foundations of induction", in The Philosophy of Jules Lachelier, Selections trans. and Introd. by Edward G. Ballard, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 1. Copleston, p. 182.

⁵²The merit of Lachelier is to show that the principle of mechanism is insufficient to explain the order of nature. This would be taken up in a different context by Boutroux's philosophy of contingency. Guittou, p. 89.

⁵³For the differences between Kant and Lachelier, see Bréhier, pp. 873-74. Guittou, p. 90.

⁵⁴Copleston, p. 183.

⁵⁵Lachelier, Foundations of Induction, p. 40.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 44.

²⁷Copleston, p. 185.

²⁸Ibid., p. 186.

²⁹Du Plessis, p. 48.

³⁰E. Caro, Le Pessimisme au XIX^e siècle, (Paris:Hachette, 1878).

³¹Jean Pierrot, The Decadent Imagination, 1880-1900, trans. Derek Coleman, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 55-56. Although Schopenhauer's Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung was not translated until 1886, in French, enough studies and commentaries existed to have allowed a grasp of his philosophy by the French public. For example, from 1850 onwards the Revue des Deux Mondes and the Journal des Debats published articles and commentaries on Schopenhauer. The first translation of the Aphorisms was in 1880. A. Baillot, Influence de la philosophie de Schopenhauer en France, 1860-1900, (Paris:J. Vrin, 1927), pp. 15-16. I may add that Schopenhauer's ideas were extended by his disciple Eduard von Hartmann whose Philosophy of the Unconscious appeared in France in 1877.

³²Pierrot, p. 56. Schopenhauer writes: "Life presents itself as a continual deception, in small matters as well as in great. If it has promised, it does not keep its word, unless to show how little desirable the desired object was; hence we are deluded now by hope, now by what was hoped for. If it has given, it did so in order to take. The enchantment of distance shows us paradises that vanish like optical illusions, when we have allowed ourselves to be fooled by them"., Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, Vol. II, trans. E.F.J. Payne, (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 573.

³³"The moral virtues are not really the ultimate end, but only a step towards it. In the Christian myth, this step is expressed by the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and with this moral responsibility appears simultaneously with original sin: This original sin itself is in fact the affirmation of the will-to-live; on the other hand, the denial of this will, in consequence of the dawning of better knowledge, is salvation". Ibid., p. 608.

³⁴Pierrot, pp. 56-57.

³⁵The exemplary model in literature, I believe, is Duc Jean des Esseintes in Joris-Karl Huysmans, Against Nature, trans. Robert Baldick, (New York: Penguin, 1982). Huysmans provides an excellent example of the literary scene with the character des Esseintes discovering Schopenhauer as

the antidote for the falling Church. "He then looked out, as it were, from the summit of his mind, over the panorama of the Church and her hereditary influence on humanity down the ages; he pictured her to himself in all her melancholy grandeur, proclaiming to mankind the horror of life, the inclemency of fate; preaching patience, contrition, the spirit of self-sacrifice; endeavouring to salve the sores of men by pointing to the bleeding wounds of Christ; guaranteeing divine privileges and promising the better part of paradise to the afflicted; exhorting the human creature to suffer, to offer to God as a holocaust his tribulations and his offences, his vicissitudes and his sorrows. He saw her become truly eloquent, speaking words full of sympathy for the poor, full of pity for the oppressed, full of menace for tyrants and oppressors.

At this point, Des Esseintes found his footing again. It is true that this admission of social corruption had his entire approval, but on the other hand, his mind revolted against the vague remedy of hope in a future life. Schopenhauer, in his opinion, came nearer to the truth. His doctrine and the Church's started from a common point of view; he too took his stand on the iniquity and rottenness of the world; he too cried in anguish with the Imitation of Christ: Verily it is a pitiful thing to live on earth! He too preached the nullity of existence, the advantages of solitude, and warned humanity that whatever it did, whichever way it turned, it would always remain unhappy - the poor because of the sufferings born of privation, the rich because of the unconquerable boredom engendered by abundance. The difference between them was that he offered you no panacea, beguiled you with no promises of a cure for your inevitable ills.

He did not drum into your ears the revolting dogma of original sin; he did not try to convince you of the superlative goodness of a God who protects the wicked, helps the foolish, crushes the young, brutalizes the old, and chastises the innocent; he did not extol the benefits of a Providence which has invented the useless, unjust, incomprehensible, and inept abomination that is physical pain. Indeed, far from endeavouring, like the Church, to justify the necessity of trials and torments, he exclaimed in his compassionate indignation: If a God has made this world, I should hate to be that God, for the misery of the world would break my heart". Against Nature, pp. 91-93.

"Mais en réalité, des Esseintes ne veut pas guérir: guérir serait accepter le monde, accepter la santé commune, bourgeoise. La névrose est révolte contre l'existence. De plus c'est, pour le décadent, un instrument de connaissance: elle lui permet de s'enfoncer dans les méandres de l'âme humaine, elle est cette exploration". Michel Lemaire, Le Dandysme: De Baudelaire à Mallarmé.

(Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1978), pp. 161-62.

⁶⁷The main representative of this view in French literature, I believe, is Villiers de l'Isle-Adam.

⁶⁸Pierrot, p. 64.

⁶⁹Ibid. , p. 68.

⁷⁰Ibid. , p. 76.

⁷¹"From the depths of a real existence governed by the pitiless laws of science, oppressed by gnawing boredom, sadness, solitude, and angst, they cried out to it to provide them with both a foundation for their esthetic and revenge against that life. It was in the name of idealism, after a period in which literature had been dominated by the exact reproduction of a monotonous or trivial reality, that they advocated a return to the powers of the imagination, aided by a refinement of sensations, by dreams, by drugs, by legends, or by the use of the artificial in various forms". Pierrot, p. 78.

⁷²Jean Kellogg, The Vital Tradition: The Catholic Novel in a Period of Convergence, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), pp. 16-21.

⁷³Pierrot, p. 81.

⁷⁴Mary Jo Nye, "The Boutroux Circle and Poincaré's Conventionalism", Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 40, 1979, p. 108. Nye, in a footnote, comments that "the revival of Kant in France was largely the work of Jules Lachelier and his student Boutroux, who along with Charles Renouvier, effected a new analysis and criticism of Kant's philosophy by French intellectuals". This, I may add, was a much more impressive and exact work than had been done by the eclectics.

⁷⁵Ibid. , p. 109. See also Léon Brunschvicg, "La philosophie d'Emile Boutroux", Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, Vol. 39, No. 3, 1922, pp. 262-63.

⁷⁶Nye, p. 109.

⁷⁷In 1871.

⁷⁸Jules Tannery (1848-1910), director of the science curriculum at the Ecole Normale supérieure. Paul Tannery (1843-1904), engineer and historian of science.

⁷⁷Nye, p. 110.

⁸⁰Ibid. , p. 112.

⁸¹Ibid. , p. 113. That Boutroux was very well acquainted with the various disciplines of his day is attested by his article "La Philosophie en France depuis 1867, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, Vol. 16, 1908, pp. 683-716. Brunschvicg writes that Boutroux's thesis "définit le moment où la critique du savoir scientifique prend conscience de soi, procédant à l'examen de la science pour la science, sans référence à un parti-pris métaphysique, en particulier sans le postulat de l'apriorisme que l'autorité de Kant parassait avoir joint par une association indissoluble à l'attitude proprement critique". Léon Brunschvicg, "La philosophie d'Emile Boutroux", Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, XXIX, no. 3, 1922, p. 271. See D. Parodi, La Philosophie contemporaine en France: Essai de Classification des Doctrines, (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1920), p. 168-69.

⁸²D. Parodi, Du Positivisme à l'Idealisme: Etudes Critiques, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1930), p. 133. Lucy Crawford writes: "Profiting by the spiritual struggles of his predecessors and taking unto himself the fundamental truths which their researches had revealed, Boutroux sought to reconcile the truths of science, of philosophy and of religion, and to unite them in a harmonious synthesis". Lucy Shepard Crawford, The Philosophy of Emile Boutroux: As representative of French Idealism in the Nineteenth Century, (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1924), p. 91. L. Brunschvicg, "La philosophie d'Emile Boutroux", pp. 265-66.

⁸³J. Benrubi, "La renaissance de la philosophie en France, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, xix, 1911, pp. 500-501. See Brunschvicg, "La philosophie d'Emile Boutroux", p. 269. Also, J. Chevalier, Histoire de la pensée, p. 468.

⁸⁴Emile Boutroux, The Contingency of the Laws of Nature, trans. Fred Rothwell, (Chicago & London: The Open Court Publ. Co., 1916), p. VI.

⁸⁵Du Plessis, p. 50.

⁸⁶Ibid. , p. 52.

⁸⁷Boutroux, Contingency, p. 5.

⁸⁸Ibid. , p. 6. In this regard, contingency is neither necessary nor accidental as Aristotle believed but is instead "une détermination qui résulte et dépend d'un grand acte de contingence initiale: un déterminisme divin ...".

Jacques Chevallier, p. 469. E. Boutroux, "Hasard ou Liberté?", Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 18, 1910, p. 145.

⁸⁹Boutroux, Contingency, p. 10.

⁹⁰Ibid. Boutroux considers it impossible to obtain demonstrations by syllogisms. Du Plessis, p. 50.

⁹¹Boutroux, Contingency, p. 13.

⁹²Ibid. , p. 20.

⁹³Ibid. , p. 23.

⁹⁴Ibid. , p. 27.

⁹⁵Michel Utu, La Crise de la théorie du savoir, (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1928), p. 43.

⁹⁶Boutroux, Contingency, p. 32.

⁹⁷Ibid. , p. 33.

⁹⁸Ibid. , pp. 37-38.

⁹⁹Ibid. , p. 39.

¹⁰⁰Michel Utu, La Crise de la théorie du savoir, pp. 52- 53.

¹⁰¹Boutroux, Contingency, p. 55.

¹⁰²Ibid. , p. 61. E. Boutroux, L'idée de loi naturelle dans la science et la philosophie contemporaine, nouvelle édition, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1950), p. 30. L. Crawford, The Philosophy of Emile Boutroux, p. 94.

¹⁰³Boutroux, Contingency, p. 62.

¹⁰⁴Ibid. , p. 87.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. , p. 91. Boutroux, L'idée de loi naturelle, p. 82.

¹⁰⁶Boutroux, Contingency, p. 91.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. , p. 98. The notion of finality is the key element in the emergence of 'new' phenomena. E. Boutroux, L'idée de loi naturelle, p. 101.

¹⁰⁸Boutroux, Contingency, p. 117. L. Crawford, p. 107.

¹⁰⁸Boutroux, Contingency, p. 127. E. Boutroux, L'idée de loi naturelle, p. 108.

¹¹⁰Boutroux, Contingency, p. 159. This hierarchy of realities goes back to Leibniz. L. Crawford, p. 108.

¹¹¹Boutroux, Contingency, p. 163. The six hierarchical stages of the world are 1) the world of cause or of Being; 2) the world of the notion or of Genera; 3) the mathematical or material world; 4) the physical world or the world of bodies; 5) the world of Living Beings; 6) the world of thought or consciousness. See Crawford, p. 108.

¹¹²Boutroux, Contingency, p. 168.

¹¹³Ibid. , p. 172.

¹¹⁴Ibid. , P. 173.

¹¹⁵Ibid. , P. 174.

¹¹⁶Here, at last, we notice a shift to theological concerns. Ibid. , p. 175.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Being, or the supreme genus are, according to Boutroux, too inadequate to explain the universe. Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid. , p. 177.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid. , p. 178.

¹²³Ibid. , p. 179.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid. , p. 184.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid. , p. 185.

¹³¹Ibid. , p. 186.

¹³²Ibid. , p. 187.

¹³³Ibid. , p. 188.

¹³⁴Ibid. , p. 189.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid. , p. 190.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid. , p. 191.

¹⁴⁰"Animal instinct, life, physical and mechanical forces are, as it were, habits that have penetrated more and more deeply into the spontaneity of being. Hence these habits have become almost unconquerable. Seen from without, they appear as necessary laws". *ibid.* , p. 192.

¹⁴¹Ibid. , p. 193.

¹⁴²Ibid. , p. 194.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. "Man freely wills to accomplish the moral ends prescribed by his practical reason; he is convinced that the value and the dignity of human life depend upon the pursuit and the realization of these ends", L. Crawford, p. 120.

¹⁴⁶Bouyroux, Contingency, p. 195.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. , pp. 195-96.

¹⁴⁸Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9 Part II, p. 9.

¹⁴⁹F. Copleston, p. 10. For the link between Ollé-Laprune and Bautain with Blondel, see McCool, p. 272, n. 50 and Horton, pp. 287-90. "M. Ollé-Laprune n'aurait pas été le philosophe qu'il fût s'il n'eut pas été chrétien; son christianisme n'aurait pas été de même portée ni peut-être de même aloi, s'il n'eut été philosophe. Le chrétien chez lui inspirait le philosophe, le philosophe soutenait et

confirmait le chrétien, et cependant il demeurait et
vrai ment chrétien et véritablement philosophe". George
Fonsegrive, Léon Ollé-Laprune: L'Homme et le Penseur,
(Paris: Bloud, 1912), p. 35. Elsewhere Fonsegrive mentions
that "Ollé-Laprune donnait, en fin de compte, raison aux
convictions spontanées du sens commun, non qu'il ne les eut
examinées, mais parce que la réflexion lui paraissait
confirmer les tendances les plus immédiates et les plus
naïves de l'esprit". G. Fonsegrive, p. 38.

¹⁵⁰Bernard Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, p. 209.

"M. Ollé-Laprune connaissait bien Kant et les philosophes allemands. Il les lisait dans le texte et, quand il le voulait bien, il démontait les diverses articulations de, leurs systèmes aussi bien que qui que ce fut. Mais il voulait avant tout construire et non pas détruire, édifier et non renverser. Analyser les expériences intimes de l'âme humaine, développer les replis de la vie spirituelle, atteindre ainsi l'être en des considérations profondes lui parut toujours une méthode supérieure à la spéculation abstraite, au jeu dialectique qui consiste à se complaire en des architectures plus ou moins fragiles d'idées. Il n'aimait ni les spéculations aventureuses ni les constructions systématiques. Le terrain des idées vivantes dans l'âme, des idées réalisées dans la vie intérieure lui paraissait plus solides et seul solide. C'est aussi la raison pour laquelle il ne pouvait consentir à philosopher en dehors du christianisme, à cesser d'être chrétien, ne fut-ce que pour un instant, afin d'être un pur philosophe. Par l'expérience directe de sa propre vie intérieure il sentait, il voyait, il savait ce que son christianisme ajoutait en lui à l'humanité, de la même façon qu'il sentait, voyait et savait ce que la raison ajoutait en lui à la sensibilité, et par conséquent son christianisme, les doctrines du christianisme devaient entrer dans sa philosophie au même titre que les principes de la raison. De même que la psychologie purement empirique et animale est incomplète et donc antiscientifique, puis qu'elle n'explique pas l'homme entier, de même une philosophie purement rationaliste qui ne va pas jusqu'au divin, qui n'aboutit pas à la religion, et par elle, au Christ est un mouvement de l'esprit qui s'arrête en route, qui donc ne résout pas le problème philosophique essentiel, celui de la destinée et par conséquent n'est pas une vraie et complète philosophie.

Le christianisme, aux yeux de M. Ollé, et non pas seulement le christianisme, mais le catholicisme avec le système entier de ses dogmes, avec la chute de l'homme et l'infaillibilité papale, fait partie intégrante de l'explication totale de la destinée humaine et par conséquent de quelque manière entre dans la philosophie pour la compléter et la terminer". G. Fonsegrive; Léon Ollé-Laprune, pp. 39-40. Fonsegrive also states: "Ainsi le catholique contient le chrétien, dans lequel se trouve le philosophe, et dans le philosophe l'homme tout entier. Homme d'abord, philosophe ensuite, catholique enfin, c'est par une expérience interne que M. Ollé-Laprune éprouve que ces diverses attributions de l'humanité en lui ne constituent pas des spécialisations et par conséquent des amoindrissements mais des agrandissements successifs". G. Fonsegrive, pp. 57-8.

¹⁵¹Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, 6^e édition, (Paris: Belin Frères, 1908), p. 4.

¹⁵²Ibid. , p. 6. "Une vie vraiment humaine est donc une vie qui se soumet au devoir et qui respecte ses prescriptions. Une vie humaine est une vie morale. Et puisque tout homme a le sentiment de l'obligation, il s'ensuit qu'il dépend de chacun de nous de vivre en homme. La vie du plus petit d'entre les hommes a un prix, puisqu'elle peut être morale. Il dépend de chacun de nous de rendre ce prix aussi élevé qu'il voudra. Obéir au devoir, c'est faire sa vie bonne et donner raison à l'optimisme; désobéir au devoir, c'est faire sa vie mauvaise et fournir des arguments au pessimisme. En elle-même et par elle-même la vie a un prix, mais il dépend de nous d'augmenter cette valeur, de l'accroître presque à l'infini, comme aussi de l'abaisser, de la ramener en deça de toute valeur positif, et en lui faisant produire des oeuvres mauvaises, de la réduire à une valeur toute négative. Cette vie morale, par le fait même qu'elle nous montre à nous-même comme obligés à faire ou à ne pas faire, nous fait voir que nous ne sommes pas isolés. Ce que les vies végétales ou animales font par nécessité de nature, l'obligation morale nous le présente comme devant être fait librement et par vertu. Nous avons reçu des autres hommes, de la société qui nous entoure, la plupart des choses nécessaires à la vie, la raison nous montre qu'il est convenables qu'à notre tour nous aidions ceux qui nous ont aidés, que même nous rendions à nos descendants ce que nos ascendants nous ont naturellement transmis, l'obligation morale nous fait un devoir de donner après avoir reçu".
Fonsegrive, pp. 51-52.

¹⁵³L. Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 9.
"La considération qui conduit M. Ollé-Laprune de la philosophie à la religion est celle de la faiblesse de l'homme. D'une façon originale encore, même après Pascal et Maine de Biran, il montre que l'homme a des moments non seulement de misère intellectuelle et physique, mais de détresse morale; l'homme sent que livré à lui-même il ne peut vouloir, il se sent plongé et comme abîmé dans l'égoïsme, il cherche un point d'appui pour s'élever au-dessus. Il reconnaît d'abord que, pour sortir de soi-même, il est nécessaire d'aimer. L'amour est l'acte vital par excellence, celui par lequel on accomplit avec allégresse tous les autres, qui nous fait faire attention aux choses les plus petites et qui nous permet d'accomplir, quand il le faut, les plus grandes. Il faut donc aimer. Mais qui? Quel est l'amour qui, remplissant la vie, l'exaltera assez pour qu'elle se renonce elle-même et parvienne à se retrouver en se perdant? Un seul, répond le philosophe, l'amour du principe même de toute existence et de toute vie, l'amour du principe de toute bonté et de toute beauté, d'un seul mot: l'amour de Dieu. Cet amour est ce qui constitue le fond et le principe inspirateur de la Religion. M. Ollé-Laprune ne s'attarde pas ici à passer en revue l'une après l'autre les diverses formes religieuses,

il va droit au christianisme et lui demande de nous exposer sa doctrine de la vie Et d'autre part le christianisme agrandit à l'infini les perspectives de l'espérance. Il promet à l'homme une destinée vraiment surhumaine. Il explique les faiblesses et les misères de notre condition par le péché d'origine, il affirme que la grâce de la rédemption a restauré et sublimé même la nature primitive Le christianisme a des préceptes et des conseils. il s'adresse à tous, aux grands et aux petits, aux savants et aux ignorants, aux forts et aux faibles. toutes les âmes peuvent y loger à l'aise, chacune y trouve une demeure appropriée pourvu qu'elle sache obéir aux impulsions intérieures et suivre sa vocation. Car à côté des préceptes prohibitifs qui nous défendent le mal, il en est d'autres que l'on peut appeler impulsifs qui nous ordonnent le bien et que nous n'avons pas le droit de négliger. Ainsi le christiannisme apparaît comme la forme religieuse adéquate à la vie humaine. La vérité dogmatique ressort de son adaptation aux besoins de notre nature Il faut être chrétien pour être un homme, la vie ne saurait être pleinement humaine qu'à la condition d'être chrétienne, telle est la conclusion de M. Ollé-Laprune". G. Fonsegrive, pp. 53-56.

¹⁵⁴L. Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 10.

¹⁵⁵Ibid. , p. 12.

¹⁵⁶Ibid. , p. 17.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸Ibid. , p. 18.

¹⁵⁹Ibid. , p. 22. F. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, vol. 9, Part II, p. 12.

¹⁶⁰L. Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 23.

¹⁶¹Ibid. , p. 26.

¹⁶²Ibid. , p. 32.

¹⁶³Ibid. , p. 43.

¹⁶⁴Ibid. , p. 47.

¹⁶⁵Ibid. , pp. 48-49.

¹⁶⁶"Le mode discursif propre à la raison humaine reparait donc dès le début même de la connaissance, et autant

Il est vrai qu'il y a des vérités fondamentales placées en dehors et au-dessus de toute contestation, autant il est vrai que dans l'exercice régulier de l'intelligence humaine toute pensée nette et distincte suppose l'emploi de ces procédés discursifs, qui rendent possible un intervalle entre l'appréhension et l'assentiment et donnent à la volonté un rôle dans le domaine intellectuel'. Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 52.

¹⁶⁷Ibid. , p. 66.

¹⁶⁸Ibid. , p. 67.

¹⁶⁹Ibid. , pp. 78-79.

¹⁷⁰This is the central feature of Michael Polanyi's epistemological concern - "We must now recognize belief once more as the source of all knowledge. Tacit assent and intellectual passions, the sharing of an idiom and of a cultural heritage, affiliation to a like-minded community: such are the impulses which shape our vision of the nature of things on which we rely for our mastery of things. No intelligence however critical or original, can operate outside such a fiduciary framework". Michael Polanyi, Personal knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy, (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 266. Elsewhere Polanyi writes: "I conclude that what earlier philosophers have alluded to by speaking of coherence of truth is only a criterion of stability. It may equally stabilize an erroneous or a true view of the universe. The attribution of truth to any particular stable alternative is a fiduciary act which cannot be analyzed in non-committal terms". Ibid. p, 294.

¹⁷¹Ollé-Laprune maintains that mediated knowledge is mixed with belief and faith. "J'avais d'abord dit croissance: insensiblement j'ai été amené à dire foi. Ce n'est point sans raison. La croyance exprime simplement ou le fait d'admettre un témoignage ou ce que l'esprit acquiert en l'admettant; c'est ainsi qu'on dit une croyance. La foi marque quelque chose de plus intime et de plus profond: ou elle se dit d'une croyance très vivace, très sérieuse, très puissante, ou elle désigne ce qui est comme le ressort même et aussi le fondement de l'acte de croire, quel qu'en soit l'objet, je veux dire la confiance". Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, pp. 89-90.

¹⁷²Ibid. , p. 94.

¹⁷³Ibid. , p. 138.

¹⁷⁴Ibid. , pp. 146-183. Maurice Blondel, Léon

Ollé-Laprune: l'Achèvement et l'Avenir de son Oeuvre, (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1923), pp. 67-71.

¹⁷⁵Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, pp. 183-205.

¹⁷⁶For Ollé-Laprune an act of judgement is an act of faith. Bernard Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, p. 215.

¹⁷⁷Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 209. "Ainsi la certitude concrète et réaliste a un caractère moral intrinsèque à son caractère intellectuel; et la croyance accompagne, commente, emplit, sans la compromettre ou la dénaturer, la connaissance la plus lumineuse, parce que jamais nous n'agissons par l'esprit seul, sans mettre en branle toutes les ressources de l'être humain. Entendue de la sorte, la croyance ne se fonde pas en rien ni sur des arguments indirects, ni sur une décision toute subjective, ni sur un coup de fidéisme; elle est intérieure, et non extérieure et ultérieure à la vision même; elle marque tout ce qui, dans l'acte de la connaissance, implique que la connaissance proprement dite n'est pas le tout de l'acte; elle tient à la fois à la nature réel et à la méthode de notre pensée". Maurice Blondel, Léon Ollé-Laprune, p. 71.

¹⁷⁸Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 208.

¹⁷⁹Ibid. , pp. 210-13.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 224.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Ibid. , p. 225.

¹⁸³Ibid. , p. 227.

¹⁸⁴Ibid. , p. 229.

¹⁸⁵Ibid. , pp. 241-42.

¹⁸⁶Ibid. , p. 261.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid. , p. 265. Ollé-Laprune is also very critical of John Stuart Mill and Alexander Bain but there is no mention made of Comte. Ollé-Laprune refers to Mill's Système de logique déductive et inductive, especially the section, "de la logique des sciences morales" and also refers to Bain's The Emotions and the Will (3rd ed., 1875) which

had not yet been translated.

¹⁸⁹ Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 315.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. , p. 327.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. , p. 329.

¹⁹² Ibid. , p. 337.

¹⁹³ Ibid. , pp. 338-39.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. , pp. 343-44.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. , p. 344.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. , p. 345.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. , p. 346.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. , pp. 347-48. Like Blondel, "M.

Ollé-Laprune s'était fait de la philosophie une idée qu'il ne modifia jamais. A ses yeux, l'oeuvre philosophique par excellence consistait à chercher à résoudre le problème de la destinée humaine, c'est-à-dire à déterminer le sens de la vie". G. Fonsegrive, Léon Ollé-Laprune, p. 35.

²⁰⁰ Léon Ollé-Laprune, p. 348.

²⁰¹ Ibid. , p. 350. "The fundamental reason for Ollé-Laprune's insistence that philosophy must finally yield to religion is the moral flaw in man's own nature, which makes it impossible for him to fulfill his human vocation completely. For between what man can achieve of himself and what God requires of him there is a fatal gap. Through sin the primal man lost sanctifying grace and his original state of righteousness. Thus his present state is one not of nature but of defect of nature; his integrity is gone, its place is taken by concupiscence, inordinate desire". Bernard Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, p. 218.

²⁰² Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, p. 375.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. , p. 378.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. , p. 381.

²⁰⁴Ibid. , p. 393.

²⁰⁷Ibid. , p. 395.

²⁰⁸Ibid. , p. 399.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰"Leur signaler les obstacles qui gênent leur vie, leur indiquer les moyens de la guérir, si elle est malade, de la fortifier si elle est faible, ce n'est point leur faire tort, à ce qu'il me semble, c'est leur rendre service". Ibid., p. 400.

²¹¹Ibid. , p. 401.

²¹²Ibid.

²¹³Ibid. , p. 402.

²¹⁴Ibid. , p. 409.

²¹⁵Ibid. , p. 408.

²¹⁶Ibid. , p. 409.

²¹⁷Ibid. , p. 410.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Ibid. , p. 411. "Ollé-Laprune insists however that though an intervention of the will is required to overcome such hesitation, this intervention derives its justification not simply from the desire to believe but rather from recognition of the fact that hesitation to give assent is unreasonable and therefore ought to be overcome". Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9 Part II, p. 14.

²²⁰Léon Ollé-Laprune, De la Certitude Morale, pp. 413-4.

²²¹Ibid. , p. 414.

²²²"... c'est la clarté même des choses communes qui nous dérobe les choses de l'âme, les choses morales, les choses divines: pour les voir, il nous faut entrer dans une sorte de nuit. Ainsi la splendeur de notre soleil voile à nos yeux infirmes l'éclat de ces milliers de soleils qui sont des étoiles: la lumière du jour nous les cache, la nuit nous les révèle". Ibid. , p. 415.

NOTES: CHAPTER III

¹John J. McNeill, The Blondelian Synthesis: A Study of the Influence of German Philosophical Sources on the Formation of Blondel's Method and Thought, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 17.

²"Par sa façon de poser le problème, Spinoza, le premier peut-être, embrasse le champ de la philosophie intégrale, comprenant non pas uniquement la question de la Science et celle de l'organisation de la vie présente, mais la question de la destinée et de la vie éternelle entendues au sens fort précis de la tradition chrétienne", Maurice Blondel, "Un Interprète de Spinoza: Victor Delbos, 1862-1916", in Dialogues avec les philosophes, préface par Henri Gouhier, (Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaignes, 1966), p. 279.

³John J. McNeill, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 17.

⁴Maurice Blondel, "L'Evolution du Spinozisme", in Dialogues avec les philosophes, p. 13. "Par la méthode, Spinoza allant jusqu'au bout, jusqu'au haut de la raison, introduit dans la compétence de l'examen philosophique des idées qui, pour avoir historiquement et théologiquement un caractère spécifiquement et positivement religieux, n'en ont pas moins une face rationnelle, une réalité immanente à l'homme: grâce aux éléments nouveaux de controverse qu'il a introduits, Spinoza est et reste une des sources principales de la pensée modernes", "Un interprète de Spinoza", Ibid., p. 279.

⁵"Enfin dans ses conclusions, soit qu'on admette la cohérence interne du Système; soit qu'on prétende que, même du point de vue purement logique, il ne doit son apparence d'homogénéité qu'à un usage équivoque des concepts d'essence et de nécessité; soit surtout qu'on vole dans les sentiments qui sont le principe secret et le couronnement récomposant et rayonnant de la doctrine une reprise des tendances profondes et des aspirations suprêmes de la conscience et de l'humanité en apparence exclues de ce pur objectivisme, Spinoza, par sa tentative en quelque manière héroïque va remuer au fond des âmes plus que de la curiosité intellectuelle", Ibid., p. 279. "Le problème humain auquel, à l'origine, semblait être subordonné le problème total, apparaît dès lors comme un élément capital dans la solution du problème divin. Et ainsi

l'anthropomorphisme de Spinoza devient l'essence même de son monisme. Voilà maintenant ce qu'il faut bien entendre; car c'est le point qui a fait la faiblesse du Spinozisme en le condamnant à l'instabilité et qui a fait sa fortune en permettant la longue et riche évolution de pensée dont il a été le point de départ La prétention du Spinozisme, c'est de tout rendre intelligible, et de résoudre le problème de l'être et de la vie par le seul effort de l'entendement, à l'exclusion des déterminations anthropomorphiques de la sensibilité ou de la conscience", Ibid. . pp. 17-18.

⁶J. McNeill, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 17.

⁷M. Blondel, "L'Evolution du Spinozisme", p. 15.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid. , p. 16.

¹⁰Ibid. , p. 17.

¹¹Ibid. , p. 18.

¹²Spinoza had introduced into philosophy the notion of salvation. See McNeill, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 25.

¹³M. Blondel, "L'Evolution du Spinozisme", p. 20.

¹⁴Ibid. , p. 16.

¹⁵Ibid. , pp. 20-21.

¹⁶Ibid. , p. 23.

¹⁷Ibid. , p. 24.

¹⁸J. McNeill, p. 48. "Blondel, however, liked to claim that there was more of Spinoza than Kant in his method of immanence. What he took from Spinoza above all was the latter's concern for the totality, the unity, of philosophical inquiry.... Blondel was clearly influenced by Spinoza's conception of life as a drama in which man comes to spiritual maturity by reflecting upon and acquiescing in the presence of the infinite in each state of mind. But Blondel resolutely refuses to reduce the perfect life to speculative knowledge, however important in itself that knowledge may be. He applauds Spinoza for seeing that morality involves metaphysics but condemns him for converting morality into metaphysics.... In view of the fact that immanentism was one of the major charges brought against modernism, it is on the face of it, curious that Blondel's admitted interest in

Spinoza was scarcely commented upon by his Catholic critics. Kant remained the villain behind the scenes throughout the modernist period. yet Spinoza's God is immanent in nature to the point of total identification, while Kant's God is transcendent to the point of inaccessibility"; Gabriel Daly, Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 48-49.

¹¹M. Blondel, "L'Evolution du Spinozisme", p. 23.

¹²J. McNeill, The Blondellian Synthesis, p. 48.

¹³Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), pp. 22-23.

¹⁴Benedict De Spinoza, Ethics, Part II, Proposition VII in On the Improvement of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence, trans. R. H. M. Elwes, (New York: Dover, n.d.), p. 86.

¹⁵J. McNeill, The Blondellian Synthesis, p. 49.

¹⁶M. Blondel, "L'Evolution du Spinozisme", p. 24. Here Blondel is quoting V. Delbos, Le Probleme Moral dans la Philosophie de Spinoza, p. 251-54. See also McNeill, Ibid., pp. 49-50.

¹⁷M. Blondel, Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁸Ibid. McNeill, p. 50.

¹⁹Blondel, p. 25. McNeill, p. 50.

²⁰McNeill, Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 51.

²²Ibid., p. 52.

²³Ibid., p. 53.

²⁴Ibid., p. 54.

²⁵McNeill writes that "in terms of modern critical understanding of Kant's philosophy, the antithetical relation which Blondel established between Spinoza and Kant can be interpreted as an exaggeration on Blondel's part of the dichotomy of reason and practice in Kant's thought. This exaggeration can be attributed in part to a lack of familiarity with Kant's Critique of Judgement". Ibid. p,

55.

²⁴Maurice Blondel, L'Action (1893), Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique, 3^e édition, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), p. 475.

²⁵"Quoi qu'on fasse donc, qu'on s'attache à la réalité ou à la nature de l'être, à la conformité du sujet et de l'objet ou à l'incompatibilité de la pensée et de la chose, au problème de la transcendance ou au problème de l'immanence même, il n'est possible de rien affirmer qu'on ne le nie, et rien nier qu'on ne l'affirme, et il n'est pas possible de ne pas affirmer et nier en même temps. C'est pour cela qu'il a suffi dans le titre de cette étude, de nommer 'l'illusion idéaliste', puisqu'elle évoque toutes les autres, comme le ferait le titre opposé; car ce mot d'idéalisme demeure forcément ambigu, et désigne aussi bien le prestige métaphysique de l'idée-objet que la fascination du subjectivisme le plus subtil. Et volontiers, pour marquer l'unité étrange de cette double déception, recourrait-on au terme plus insolite d'illusion intellectualiste. N'est-il pas troublant de constater en soi des tendances tellement hostiles, tellement unies qu'on ne satisfait l'une qu'en se contredisant immédiatement, et qu'on ne se soustrait pas non plus, ce semble, à la nécessité de s'enfoncer en cette impasse"? Maurice Blondel, "L'illusion Idéaliste", in Les Premiers Ecrits de Maurice Blondel, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), p. 107. Elsewhere Blondel writes: "D'un côté, une conception générique, dont l'idéalisme et le réalisme sous toutes leurs formes variées ne sont que des espèces hybrides, et qu'on peut nommer 'intellectualisme': elle se résume en cette erreur fondamentale. Le fait de penser y est pris en lui-même, séparé de l'acte même de penser, considéré non comme résidu ou comme retentissement de la vie à la fois physiologique et morale, générique et individuelle, mais comme réalité en l'air, déraciné de ses origines vitales, mutilé dans ses ramifications naturelles, étudié telle qu'une momie immobilement semblable à elle-même". Ibid., p. 120. Also see J. McNeill, The Blondellian Synthesis, pp. 108-09.

²⁶Ibid., p. 108.

²⁷Or as one scholar puts it: "Speaking in an anticipatory vein, we can say that for Hegel the possibility of reconciling being and thought about being lies in the gradual suppression of opposition between subject and object, that is, in the dialectical interplay of subjective and objective elements in thought about reality. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, which entails a reformulation of the notions of 'subject' and 'object', was written precisely

to clarify this basic insight". Joseph L. Navickas, Consciousness and Reality: Hegel's Philosophy of Subjectivity, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 12.

³⁰Letter to Emile Boutroux, September 16, 1886 in Maurice Blondel, Lettres Philosophiques, (Paris: Aubier, éditions Montaigne, 1961), p. 10.

³¹Letter to the dean of the Sorbonne, March 22, 1887. M. Blondel, Ibid., pp. 12-13.

³²J. McNeill, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 59.

³³Ibid., p. 60.

³⁴Maurice Blondel, L'Action (1893), p. VII.

³⁵James M. Somerville, Total Commitment: Blondel's L'Action, (Washington, Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1968), p. 44. "Plus qu'une nécessité, l'action m'apparaît souvent comme une obligation; il faut qu'elle se produise par moi, même alors qu'elle exige de moi un choix douloureux, un sacrifice, une mort: non seulement j'y use ma vie corporelle, mais j'y meurtris toujours des arrectations et des desirs qui réclameraient tout, chacun pour soi. On ne marche, on n'apprend, on ne s'enrichit qu'en se fermant toutes les voies sauf une et qu'en s'appauvrissant de tout ce qu'on eût pu savoir et gagner autrement: y-a-t-il plus subtil regret que celui de l'adolescent contraint, pour entrer dans la vie, de borner sa curiosité comme par des oeillères? Chaque détermination retranche une infinité d'actes possibles. A cette mortification naturelle personne n'échappe.", Maurice Blondel, L'Action II, L'Action Humaine et les Conditions de son Aboutissement, Nouvelle Edition, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 16.

³⁶"... l'action m'apparaît souvent comme une obligation ... Si je n'agis pas de mon propre mouvement, il y a quelque chose en moi ou hors de moi qui agit contre moi". Maurice Blondel, L'Action (1893), pp. VIII-IX.

³⁷"La métaphysique est dans l'action" - 27 mai, 1889, Maurice Blondel, Carnets Intimes, Tome I, 1883-1894, (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1961), p. 216.

³⁸Maurice Blondel, L'Action (1893), p. 1.

³⁹"Le milieu philosophique des années 1880 oscillait donc entre le scientisme et le dilettantisme en passant par le pessimisme. Si la science ne résout pas le problème de la vie soit parce qu'elle se heurte à des obstacles insurmontables, soit parce que qu'éclatent des lois dans

lesquelles elle voulait enserrer la vie, il semble qu'il ne reste que deux solutions: soit renoncer à cette vie, comme le pessimiste, soit jouer avec elle, comme le dilettante". Raymond Saint-Jean, Genèse de L'Action: Blondel 1883-1893, (Desclee de Brouwer, 1965), p. 32.

⁴⁶Blondel, L'Action(1893), p. 2.

⁴⁷Ibid. , p. 4.

⁵⁰"Le dilettantisme de l'art et de la science ne suffit pas longtemps: il se complète vite par le dilettantisme de la sensation et de l'action". Ibid. . p. 6. See L'Action II, pp. 419- 23.

⁵¹Blondel, L'Action(1893), p. 22.

⁵²James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 58.

⁵³Maine de Biran's position is "I will, I act, therefore, I am". Blondel's objective realism corresponds to "I will, therefore, there is something". In both cases, existence is predicated on the intentionality as it encounters the 'other'.

⁵⁴L'Action(1893), p. 16. Blondel believes that this position has its roots in pantheism.

⁵⁵L'Action(1893), p. 17

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid. , p. 18.

⁵⁸Ibid. , p. 19.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Maurice Blondel, Action(1893): Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice, trans. Oliva Blanchette, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 32-33. (For block quotations I shall use the 1950 French edition and, while quoting in the body of the text I shall use this English translation.

⁶³L'Action(1893), p. 20.

⁶⁴"Il n'a craché sur la vie que pour se saouler

d'elle et de soi". L'Action(1893), p. 20. "Et quand sur ces ruines fictives, il jouit du phénomène pour éprouver le néant des choses avec un épicurisme étrangement raffiné; ou quand il agit, pour s'exalter dans le néant de soi, avec la volupté d'une sorte d'athéisme mystique, tout dans son attitude n'est que mensonge; et qu'est-ce que le mensonge, en effet, sinon l'opposition intime de deux volontés, l'une sincère et droite dont la permanente et inviolable présence sert d'incorruptible témoignage, l'autre défaillante et fallacieuse, qui prend corps dans la réalité mauvaise des actes? Il ne s'agit donc pas de contradictions légitimes ou nécessaires, ni d'involontaires erreurs: il y a fausseté; le vice intellectuel du système qu'il est difficile de dévoiler, est le signe et la peine de l'inconséquence ou de la duplicité morale où il est aisé à la volonté de tomber. La condamnation et le châtement de cet état voulu, ce doit être ce même état, clairement connu; car dans la lumière de la pleine connaissance, les contradictions volontaires de l'action deviennent les contradictions nécessaires de la souffrance; et par une revanche inévitable du volontaire contre le voulu, c'est du fond même de la sincérité et du primitif amour de l'être pour l'être que devront surgir les représailles de la sanction". M. Blondel, L'Action II, p. 55.

⁶⁵L'Action(1893), p. 21.

⁶⁶Ibid. Blondel states that "la volonté qui se porte à l'anéantissement de la personne humaine, se fonde, qu'elle le sache ou non, sur une estime singulière et un amour absolu de l'être". L'Action II, p. 78.

⁶⁷James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 62.

⁶⁸L'Action(1893), p. 21.

⁶⁹It is noteworthy to recall that Blondel had reviewed Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation under the name of Maurice de Marie, Compte rendu de A. Schopenhauer, Le monde comme volonté et comme représentation, trad. fr. de A. Burdeau, tome II, Paris: Alcan, 1889 in Biblio. Cathol. t. 80 n. 4 (Oct. 1889), 316-7. Blondel saw that Kant's removal of reason to save morality was at the risk of making possible the systematisation of pessimism. René Virgoulay & Claude Troisfontaines, Maurice Blondel: Bibliographie analytique et critique. I Oeuvres de Maurice Blondel (1880-1973), (Louvain:Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Centre Archives de Maurice Blondel, 1975), p. 21.

⁷⁰Action, in Blondel's estimate is beyond the measurement of quantitative science.

⁷¹James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 65.

⁷²Schopenhauer had concluded that "the need for salvation from an existence given up to suffering and death, and its attainability through the denial of the will, hence by a decided opposition to nature, is beyond all comparison the most important truth there can be", Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, vol. II, p. 628.

⁷³M. Blondel, L'Action (1893), p. 28.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 28

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 29

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Cf. L'Action II, p. 73.

⁸²"What enables the dilettante to conceal for so long the inner contradictions between his authentic will and his specious will is the fact that all words in his vocabulary have a double meaning, depending on whether he is speaking the language of the subject or of the object. The confusion is compounded when he shifts from the level of the senses to that of the mind, and even this dichotomy can be treated from the subjective or objective point of view. So with four terms and as many suppositions, the skillful dialectician is able to dance his way through every refutation. He can take refuge in the nothingness of self, or of the object, or of the senses, or of the mind, shifting his position as occasion offers. If, in order to volatilize the self, the subject sets out to lose himself in the vanity of objective effusion, he can show that the object is all and that the subject is no more subsistent than a cat, which has no self. If he denies being to all that is not the self, he can slip through the net of his own denial by always surviving every negation. But it is all a trick; in fact, it is the abuse of all". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 62.

⁸³"Something rises up when one plunges into the unknown. It is not a void but the ever-receding mystery that brought awe to the heart of a Pascal or a Spencer. Before it

the understanding may come to a halt, but the will is not put off by its inability to comprehend; rather it is stimulated to reach for something more, for something that is not nothing but all. Not finding his all in phenomena he assumes that there is nothing. Actually, he only succeeds in witnessing to the fact that what the senses encounter is nothing alongside what he wants. In the nothingness of appearances there looms up something more than what appears, as though one were to say: what is the value of anything that is not eternal"? James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 67-68.

"This is essentially the conclusion of Des Esseintes in Huysmans' novel, Against Nature where Des Esseintes is torn between desire and satiety, hope and despair. The finite never suffices, hence, the infinite is needed.

"James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 68.

"L'Action (1893), p. 34. L'Action II, p. 77.

"L'Action (1893), p. 35.

"Ibid.

"Le pessimisme, y-a-t-on réfléchi, laisse éclater une immense et invincible confiance dans la toute-puissance de la volonté puisqu'elle semble et nécessaire et suffisante pour produire la douleur de l'existence comme aussi pour créer le bienheureux anéantissement qui ne serait pas sans elle. Et pardela cette fin voulue et proclamée, il y a une pleine foi, il y a un hymne à l'action souveraine et créatrice du vouloir". L'Action II, p. 80.

"L'Action (1893), p. 37.

"Ibid., pp. 37-38.

"Blondel writes that the symbolic representation of nothingness comes from a two-fold synthesis: "the subject affirmed without object, along with the object affirmed without subject". Action, p. 50.

"Blondel points out that "some ... can deny the phenomenon through the pure idea they have of being, others can deny being through the obsessive image they have of the phenomenon", Action, p. 49.

"In this way, says Blondel, "the will always ends up willing what it wanted to exclude", Action, p. 50.

"Just as Descartes doubting of his existence

affirms it.

²⁴James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 70.

²⁵M. Blondel, Action, p. 40.

²⁶L'Action (1893), p. 41. "Est-ce au nom de l'expérience ou de la science que je puis affirmer le néant? Non. Qu'elles multiplient leurs analyses et leurs destructions, toujours elles s'arrêtent, et leur compétence cesse.... Bien plus, quand je nierais la nature et l'esprit, quand j'aurais nié tout ce que j'ai pu, il reste toujours quelque chose à nier, un infini qui m'échappe et où tombent mes destructions successives. D'éléments en éléments, l'analyse à dissocié, exténué, sublime l'apparente réalité; plus d'activité, plus de qualités, une indetermination pure, ce qui peut s'ajouter à tout passif, ce qui ne peut être conçu seul, ce que les anciens nommaient la matière première, et moins encore, l'être sans être. Mais derrière, voici quelque chose qui grandit, un inconnu, un mystère réel, qui épouvante la pensée d'un Pascal, d'un Littré, d'un Spencer, et devant lequel l'entendement n'agit plus, étonné de l'immensité de ce qu'il voit, et ne sachant qu'une chose, c'est qu'il ne le peut comprendre, c'est qu'aussi rien ne peut être compris, nié, mis en doute, admis sans cette mystérieuse affirmation". L'Action II, pp. 76-77.

²⁷L'Action (1893), p. 40.

²⁸Ibid., p. 41.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰"In my acts, in the world, inside of me, outside of me, I know not where or what, there is something", Action, p. 52.

³¹Blondel will argue that "the apparent necessity of each stage results from an implicit willing". Action, p. 52.

¹⁰⁴Blondel writes that "from the first awakening of sensible life all the way to the highest forms of social activity, a continuous movement is unfolded in us whose rigorous concatenation and fundamentally voluntary character it is possible to manifest at one and the same time". Action, p. 52.

¹⁰⁵From this understanding the wills will infinitely.

¹⁰⁶James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 71.

¹⁰⁷M. Blondel, L'Action(1893), p. 42.

¹⁰⁸Ibid. , p. 45.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. , p. 52.

¹¹⁰Jacques Flamand, L'Idée de Médiation chez Maurice Blondel, (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts; Paris: Beatrice Nauwelaerts, 1969), pp. 296-301.

¹¹¹Action, p. 64.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³L'Action(1893), p. 54.

¹¹⁴Action, p. 65.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid. . p. 66.

¹¹⁷L'Action(1893), p. 79.

¹¹⁸Action, p. 88.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid. "There appears to be no way to explain the synchronization of the orders of thought and experience of the a priori and the a posteriori, without the mediation of an action which provides each order with elements and methods borrowed from the other". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 93.

¹²¹Action, p. 92.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³L'Action(1893), pp. 85-6. M. Blondel, "Lettre

sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière d'apologetique et sur la méthode de la philosophie dans l'étude du problème religieux", originally in Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne, 1896 in Les Premiers Ecrits de Maurice Blondel, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), p. 10.

¹²⁴Action, p. 92.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 92-3.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 93. This is because the cohesion of the sciences implies a mediation which they do not explain which is the irreducible surplus of subjectivity. Blondel writes that "science cannot stop with science", Action, p. 86. That morality can be established scientifically, see Maurice Blondel, "Principe élémentaire d'une logique de la vie morale", Bibliothèque du Congrès internationale de Philosophie, Paris, 1903, reprinted in Les Premiers Ecrits de Maurice Blondel, pp. 123-47.

¹²⁷L'Action (1893), p. 87.

¹²⁸The concern is "how phenomena are interiorized and how from objective knowledge itself we are led to extract a more and more precise notion of the subject". M. Blondel, Action, p. 96.

¹²⁹Action, p. 95

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 96.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid., p. 97.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴L'Action (1893), p. 93.

¹³⁵Action, p. 102.

¹³⁶"The least glimmer of organization and of subjective life presupposes a prodigious integration of elementary actions and reactions already systematized and more and more natured (naturee), an interweaving of all the threads that necessity spins out to form the growing complexity of forms, of instincts and of sensibilities. The fact of consciousness then is the product, not merely of the last, but of all the antecedent acts, conscious or unconscious, that converge and are summed up in it. Also it is not isolated from the other phenomena, but it maintains a

double relation with all the others: - on one side, the subjective fact is the condition of all the phenomena that are the object of the positive sciences, so that the knowledge of these phenomena depends on it and is possible only through its unnoticed presence in every sensible intuition and in every scientific affirmation: - on the other hand, the subjective fact has as its conditions all these same phenomena so that the very reality of this fact depends on them and the most obscure consciousness bears within it and represents all the determinism of its antecedent", Maurice Blondel, Action, p. 102.

¹³⁷Ibid. . p. 105.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰L'Action(1893), p. 100.

¹⁴¹Action, p. 107.

¹⁴²This follows the line of thought or the 'spiritualist' philosophy of de Biran, Ravaisson, Lachelier, and Boutroux.

¹⁴³Action. p. 111.

¹⁴⁴Ibid. . p. 112.

¹⁴⁵L'Action(1893), p. 106.

¹⁴⁶Action, p. 112.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. . p. 113.

¹⁴⁸Ibid. . p. 114.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, (Garden City: Doubleday: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 4.

¹⁵¹Reflection is both an inhibitor and a stimulant to desire.

¹⁵²"... L'action, c'est une volonté disciplinant, coordonnant, unifiant toutes les énergies de l'être composé, ralliant les tendances contraires en une force composante, excluant la volonté contradictoire, et convertissant à une direction tout ce qui, dans cet être, pouvait être converti ...", Sept. 6, 1889. M. Blondel, Carnets Intimes, p. 243

¹⁵³Here we may recall the alternative posed by Malebranche: "...mettre au fondement de l'univers, soit une volonté indifférente, capricieuse, changeante, arbitraire, dont nous ignorons les décrets, soit une volonté soumise à la Raison. Dans le premier cas, il n'y a plus ni science, ni morale, ni religion possible. Dans le second, il y a une science, une morale, une religion absolument rationnelles et certaines: la subordination de la volonté à la Raison assure la rationalité de l'univers, et l'union de notre esprit avec la Raison, la certitude absolue de notre connaissance". Ginette Dreyfus, La Volonté selon Malebranche, (Parrs: J. Vrin, 1958), p. 37.

¹⁵⁴Action, p. 119.

¹⁵⁵L'Action(1893), p. 116.

¹⁵⁶"Le sentiment, la conscience de la liberté impliquent un infini qui la fonde". Jean-M. Van Parys, La Vocation de la Liberté: Etude de la Liberté d'après les principales oeuvres philosophiques de Maurice Blondel, (Louvain; Nauwelaerts; Québec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1968), p. 33.

¹⁵⁷James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp.114-5.

¹⁵⁸Action, p. 123. "L'action humaine a conscience d'être irréductible aux pulsions instinctives et aux passions d'où elle peut sembler procéder; le déterminisme des causes efficientes est subordonné à une finalité". Jean-M. Van Parys, La Vocation de la Liberté, p. 34.

¹⁵⁹Action, p. 123. See Van Parys, p. 37. See Action II, p. 161.

¹⁶⁰Action, p. 123.

¹⁶¹Ibid. See Action II, p. 161.

¹⁶²Action, p. 124.

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴L'Action(1893), p. 120. See Action II, p. 161.

¹⁶⁵"... the more we understand the greatness of the world and this immense duration where we are as though lost, the higher we are above it", Action, p. 122.

¹⁶⁶"La liberté n'est pas pure. Elle ne transforme les déterminismes en forces efficientes dans la finalité

qu'elle élit qu'en se soumettant à leurs conditions. Les déterminismes sont donc nécessaires pour que la liberté prenne conscience d'elle-même". Van Parys, La Vocation de la Liberté, p. 40.

¹⁶⁷James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 116.

¹⁶⁸Action II, p. 163.

¹⁶⁹Freedom is measured by what is ahead, by finality.

¹⁷⁰Action, p. 127.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²"I walk under the weight of the infinite", Action, p. 127.

¹⁷³Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵In this way, heteronomy of the law corresponds to its inner autonomy. See Action, p. 130.

¹⁷⁶James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 118.

¹⁷⁷Action, p. 131. Here Blondel is thinking of the error of Kant's moral formalism.

¹⁷⁸Action, p. 132.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 133.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 121.

¹⁸³Action, p. 134.

¹⁸⁴Total Commitment, p. 121.

¹⁸⁵Action, p. 136.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸"To will what we truly will is to submit to a

practical will". Ibid.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Total Commitment, p. 123.

¹⁹⁴Action, p. 137.

¹⁹⁵"We are called to live and to operate in a region higher than distinct consciousness". Action, p. 139.

¹⁹⁶This, of course, refers to the kind of formal rationality of morality found in Kant.

¹⁹⁷Action, p. 141.

¹⁹⁸Ibid..

¹⁹⁹"For if in concentrating within itself the infinity of the milieu whence it draws its sap, action is the end of a world, it is at the same time the beginning of a new world". Ibid, p. 143.

²⁰⁰Ibid.

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Ibid.

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

¹In his diary entry for Sept. 6, 1889, Blondel writes: "L'Action, c'est une volonté disciplinant, coordonnant, unifiant toutes les énergies de l'être composé, ralliant les tendances contraires en une force composante, excluant la volonté contradictoire, et convertissant à une direction tout ce qui, dans cet être, pouvait être converti ...". M. Blondel, Carnets Intimes, Tome I, p. 248. Elsewhere Blondel writes: "Dans le corps, l'action retentit partout: connexion et diffusion des reflexes, conscience virtuelle, synergie organique et nerveuse, surtout dans l'acte qui communique la vie et resume en une cellule l'être entier Dans l'action est présente ou représentée la plénitude de la puissance, l'excès de la vie, la fleur de l'être. (La raison est la conscience de l'infini. La liberté est la puissance de l'infini)". *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10. Again elsewhere (Feb. 19, 1890) Blondel continues to meditate on the amplitude of action: "L'Action c'est le verbe incarné, la pensée corporelle, l'organisme spiritualisé." *Ibid.*, p. 329. "L'action est la spiritualité même, en ce qu'elle a d'unifié, de vie, de concret; il faut la penser comme l'unité organisatrice. C'est par là surtout que la spiritualité est pensée par opposition à tout ce qui est vu dehors". Aime Forest, "Lecture de Blondel", Giornale di Metafisica, XXVIII, n. 2, 1973, p. 115.

²The point of departure here is Leibniz which made it possible for Blondel to see action as a unifying spirituality which co-ordinates all the energies of the composed being and rallies together all the tendencies in a composed form, hence, coordinating the contradictory wills into a unique direction.

³Blondel was very aware of the subjective turn in modern thought. In his diary entry of Nov. 22, 1888 Blondel had written: "Sous la forme particulière du cartesianisme, il y a plusieurs vérités très générales et très profondes. Qu'on suppose même un Dieu trompeur: par l'infinité de notre volonté et la divinité de notre libre nature, nous mettrons ses ruses en échec. C'est donc par la volonté libre et agissante que nous échappons au doute et que nous constituons nous-même cette expérience métaphysique qui ne trompe pas. Kant n'a pas vu cela. Je veux et je suis: j'agis et je sais". Carnets Intimes I, p. 158.

⁴M. Blondel, Action, p. 147.

Leo Zonneveld writes this comment on the scope of Blondel's vision: "A philosophy of the concrete universal order does not neglect anything. There is no isolation from experience, feeling, psychological states, nor is there any negation of the most diverse theses which de facto exist in the history of human thought. The fruitfulness of a philosophy depends upon the relationship that in daily life already exists on a prereflective level between man and his world, between man and his neighbor, and between man and the Absolute. A study of action requires, therefore, that we approach life without prejudice and place no obstacle to the immanent pre-philosophical dialectic which is a normal part of human life. Thus the object of philosophical reflection is not a static and passive datum but the acting agent in all his restlessness and existential relations." Leo Zonneveld, "Maurice Blondel: Action and the Concept of Christian Philosophy", in John R. Ryan ed. Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, Volume 5: Ancients and Moderns, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1970), p. 251.

"In presenting a definition of action to himself Blondel has this to say: "Synergie dans l'esprit: association et surtout raison. La raison a son centre en Dieu et y rattache tout. La passion, elle aussi a son centre, mais en un pauvre objet, et elle y assujettit tout, même Dieu. Synergie dans la vie morale: mieux que solidarité, charité, amour, acte, passion, contemplation." Carnets Intimes I, p. 110."

"Pour resumer la position blondélienne sur le caractère plural de la société humaine, nous dirons qu'elle articule son argumentation sur deux plans: la pluralité de sociétés, des cultures et des civilisations, ainsi que le rôle spécifique de chacune dans la conquête de l'autonomie et de l'unité humaines, répondent à un impératif de la nature et aux exigences de l'action volontaire. Condensés et réalisés en l'homme sous la forme de besoins et de desirs, ces deux ordres constituent la double structure de l'être social. Ainsi, l'homme a besoin de sociétés comme il en a le désir: ici, le multiple le place à part dans le monde des êtres qui vivent en société. En effet, chez les animaux sociaux, la pluralité des groupes tient à des besoins de l'espèce plutôt qu'à des intérêts ou à des ambitions des individus; elle suit la loi du nombre d'individus, et non celle de l'initiative de chacun; il s'agit d'un pluriel numérique commandé par l'instinct. Il en va autrement de l'homme. Ses besoins physiques, biologiques et matériels l'incitent à se grouper, comme les animaux sociaux. Mais chez l'homme, les déterminismes biophysiques sont tout pénétrés d'intentionnalité. Autrement dit, le besoin humain d'une pluralité de sociétés s'imbrique à un désir humain de

susciter ou d'inventer le maximum de moyens et de milieux de croissance: l'homme crée des sociétés, non pas uniquement par besoins instinctuels, mais aussi et surtout par initiatives personnelles répondant à des intérêts, à des idées, à des ambitions et à des objectifs spirituels. La pluralité des sociétés humaines, de même que la tâche spécifique qui est fixée à chacune, sont donc des œuvres de nature, de raison et de liberté". Leo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale dans l'œuvre de Maurice Blondel, (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1978), p. 167.

⁴⁰M. Blondel, L'Action (1893), p. 162.

⁴¹M. Blondel, Action, p. 162.

⁴²"Ideas have in them a dynamism that is directed towards the concrete realization of their meaning. Thus, they are not effects of the interior dynamism, but causes in the order of finality. This truth even has a physiological counterpart: while the cerebral hemispheres are the term of an afferent movement which begins in the end organs or in the subconscious life of the subject, the response that the nervous system returns is never merely a mechanical restatement of what has been received. In reaching the hemispheres the stimulus undergoes a process of elaboration, so that when it is returned to the organism in an efferent movement, it is not simply the effect or duplicate of its antecedent conditions, but is transformed and changed. Similarly, whatever be the antecedent conditions of ideation, viewed as the term of an organic process, once the idea has entered consciousness, it becomes in turn a new point of departure. The effects in the order of finality that will henceforth accompany and follow upon it (the efferent phase cannot be reduced from the antecedent conditions that efficiently produced it (the afferent phase)." James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 129.

⁴³Ibid., p. 130. More important, still, from the Biranian tradition comes the assertion of one's existence in a manner that departs radically from Descartes. While Descartes admits "I think, therefore, I am", Maine de Biran counters with "I will, I move, therefore, I am".

⁴⁴Action, p. 157. "In the eyes of consciousness, the body is a beginning of subjective life. It is what resists the immediate expansion and the ideal reality of willing, but it is also what submits and lends itself to it. It would be radically beyond the agent if it did not enclose something of the agent on the way to realizing himself. This is why action is instructive: it manifests to the subject a subjective life other than his own, a life he conquers by degrees, a life that already belongs to him more than he

knows, but which he does not yet possess completely and which often escapes him more than he thinks." Ibid.

¹³James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 134.

¹⁴In a most basic way this entails the antagonism¹⁵ between the body and mind, the demands of culture and the demands of nature, of freedom and determinism, the flesh and spirit.

¹⁵Action, p. 159.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid. , p. 169.

¹⁸Ibid. , p. 170.

¹⁹Ibid. , p. 172.

²⁰Ibid. , p. 173.

²¹Ibid. ,

²²Somerville offers this comment: "For all its fury, animal passion by comparison is shallow and transient; for it is not saturated with this immanent rationality which communicates to the flesh something of the shrewdness or the spirit, enabling it to ape and counterfeit the higher law." Total Commitment, pp. 139- 40.

²³Somerville writes that "there is an immanent logic that governs even the genesis of passion". Ibid. , p. 138.

²⁴Action, p. 174.

²⁵Total Commitment, p. 140.

²⁶Action, p. 177.

²⁷Ibid. , p. 178

²⁸L'Action(1893). p. 184.

²⁹Action, p. 181.

³⁰Ibid. , pp. 181-82.

³¹Ibid. , p. 182.

³²The diary entry of Oct. 15, 1889 states: "La personnalité morale est une synthèse à la fois organique et

psychologique; et cette synthèse résulte d'une synergie: c'est par l'action que se forme le concours de l'unité des organes et des facultés de l'homme. On ne décompose pas une machine pendant qu'elle marche: marchons toujours; l'ennemi n'aura point de prise sur nous". Carnets Intimes I, p. 258.

³⁰Action, p. 184.

³¹Ibid., p. 187.

³²Ibid. "En apparaissant comme un principe original et toujours spécifique, la vie ne surgit cependant pas sous nos yeux sans des appuis inférieurs et des concours physico-chimiques. Mais si, dans le domaine de notre expérience, elle suppose déjà des activités subalternes, elle ne constitue pas moins une nouveauté irréductible à la multiplicité des éléments et des forces qui contribuent à son avènement dans le monde. Elle est un aboutissement provisoire du dynamisme cosmique; mais elle est aussi une initiative originale qui elle-même n'apparaît jamais que comme une action transitive, un passage, un effort vers une perpétuation, une tendance croissante vers une finalité et un ordre préparatoire à la conscience et à la pensée". M. Blondel, L'Action I : Le problème des causes secondes et le pur agir, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), p. 163.

³³L'Action (1893), p. 193.

³⁴Action, p. 190.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 191.

³⁷Ibid., p. 192.

³⁸L'Action (1893), p. 199.

³⁹Action, p. 193.

⁴⁰Blondel comments that this is a determinism that great men of action felt as a breath of fatality pass through them and carry along their destiny. Ibid. An example of a man who feels his destiny to be both purposeful and fateful is Captain Ahab when he says: "The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron nails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents' beds, unerringly I rush! Naught's an obstacle, naught's an angle to the iron way!". Herman Melville, Moby Dick, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company,

Riverside Editions, 1956), p. 142-43.

⁴⁴Van Parys writes: "Tout au long de l'histoire humaine, le vouloir fondamental de l'acte qui a la liberté pour raison et fin, ne sait jamais encore ce qu'il veut. L'essence n'est pas donnée; elle est à faire. La finalité est active, mais elle est obscure." Jean-M. Van Parys, La Vocation de la Liberté, p. 116.

⁴⁵Action, p. 196.

⁴⁶Ibid. p. 197.

⁴⁷Ibid. , p. 198.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid. , p. 199.

⁵⁰Ibid. , p. 200.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid. , p. 201.

⁵⁴Ibid. , p. 202. Blondel has this to say: "Pour créer un signe, pour concevoir un monde de notions et de représentations doublant en quelque sorte le monde réel, pour prétendre insérer dans l'univers donné un changement conscient et voulu, en un mot, pour avoir l'initiative d'une idée et d'une intervention efficace, il faut que l'homme ait le sentiment immédiat et profond de sa supériorité sur les choses, de la transcendance, de son pouvoir et de ses fins personnelles. Tandis que l'animal reste emprisonné et asservi dans l'ordre immanent des forces auxquelles il s'adapte comme une partie dans le tout, l'homme a constamment l'inquiétude, la nostalgie de ce qui n'est pas, de ce qui devrait être, de ce qu'il voudrait sentir ou produire; et c'est là le principe commun de l'art, de la science, de la moralité, de l'aspiration religieuse." Maurice Blondel, La Pensée I: La genèse de la pensée et les paliers de son ascension spontanée, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), p. 111. Van Parys writes that "c'est l'institution du signe qui permet de distinguer entre tel objet et tel désir, qui permet de saisir le désir comme tendant à un au-delà de son objet immédiat. Et comme c'est arbitrairement et volontairement que le signe est choisi et chargé de son sens, son institution implique non seulement la découverte de la vraie nature du désir, mais encore celle de l'être libre qui l'institue. L'institution volontaire du signe comporte donc

la prise de conscience de l'être du sujet qui transcende le monde spatio-temporel dont il ne peut se satisfaire. Elle comporte en même temps le désir d'une valeur supra-spatiale et supratemporelle de la réalité, que la valeur symbolique conférée aux objets exprime." Jean-M. Van Parys, La Vocation de la Liberté, p. 74.

²⁵Action, p. 202. "Le signe, quoique en apparence purement représentatif d'une réalité à laquelle il reste inférieur, et quoique servant d'outillage ébauche pour notre prise de connaissance et de possession du monde où nous plongeons et de nos besoins à satisfaire, témoigne d'autre part de la supériorité de notre pensée dominante, tendant à refaire et à dépasser l'univers entier. Or le sentiment, si obscur qu'il soit, de cette précellence de la pensée sur les données dont elle doit tenir compte, mais dont elle ne se contente jamais, engendre la conviction du caractère supra-naturel de cette création d'un signe, la valeur idéale et quasi divine de l'œuvre produite par ce génie intérieur qui surpasse les forces de la nature, met une empreinte sur le mystère et immisce l'homme au secret des êtres." M. Blondel, La Pensée I, pp. 109-10.

²⁶L'Action(1893), p. 209.

²⁷Action, p. 203.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid. . p. 204.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid. Van Parys comments: "L'efficacité s'est accrue, non seulement de sa propre orientation, mais d'une précision de l'intention, par sa nouvelle capacité d'initiative, face à la cause finale. La finalité, par ailleurs, exerce plus fortement son attraction, grâce à l'orientation plus précise des forces efficaces." La Vocation de la Liberté, pp. 117-18.

³²Action, p. 207.

³³Ibid. .

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid. , p. 208.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷L'Action(1893), p. 216.

⁶⁶Action, p. 209.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 210.

⁷²Ibid., p. 211.

⁷³Ibid., p. 212.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 217.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 218.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 219.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid. A comment by Jacques Flamand is noteworthy here: "L'oeuvre d'art est donc le signe d'une realite plus grande qu'elle; aussi est-elle souvent plus efficace que le discours qui risque de s'appauvrir dans l'abstraction. Du fait qu'elle n'est pas un signe notionnel mais qu'elle affecte le sujet tout entier dans la perception qu'il en a, l'oeuvre esthetique est saisie affective avant d'être conceptualisee. C'est un avantage et une richesse, en même temps qu'une limitation, car elle n'est pas sans ambiguïté, du fait même de son indétermination. C'est pourquoi l'oeuvre d'art est insuffisante à elle seule pour permettre une communication complete avec autrui. Seul le langage verbal possède la precision et la rigueur que requiert la transmission d'un message defini." Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, (Louvain, Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1969), p. 318

⁸²Action, p. 219. Blondel goes on to say that "art is .. the mythical summation of all the future development of the will in quest of its perfect completion. Into the sensible world, into the phenomenon, it fictitiously inserts the real, the living, the human, the divine: it instinctively

captures and develops by intuition the symbolic equivalent of all the aspirations still implicit in willing." Ibid. p. 220.

⁸⁵Somerville makes some interesting observations in the light of Blondel's view of art - "All action transcends the individual life that gave it birth. There is a hidden proselytism in every work: we do not act for ourselves alone nor merely to amuse ourselves, but are often impelled to give something to the world. In this connection artistic creation is a privileged case. It is significant that art is as old as man himself, a fact that suggests that it is rooted in nature and corresponds to a profound desire of the will. Man wants to create, to detach something from himself that will live its own life and continue to exercise an action beyond any particular time and place." James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 159.

⁸⁶Action, p. 221.

⁸⁷Ibid. "L'affirmation blondélienne de l'immanence de la société en l'homme s'oppose à toute interprétation intrinséciste, qui considère l'être social comme une fin en soi, et à toute lecture extrinséciste, qui cherche hors de l'homme exclusivement les fondements et les éléments constitutifs de la société humaine. Blondel tâchera plutôt de combiner l'extériorité et l'intériorité de cette réalité de manière à sauvegarder la double structure unitaire de la société: celle d'une oeuvre de nature et celle d'une oeuvre de culture." Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale dans l'oeuvre de Maurice Blondel, p. 45.

⁸⁸Action, p. 222.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid. Flamand writes that "les moyens de communication nécessaires qui nous permettent d'entrer en relation mutuelle, sont des signes expressifs, authentiques médiateurs spirituels: le langage verbal tout d'abord, mais aussi toute oeuvre humaine; ces signes, en tant que médiateurs d'un message destiné aux autres hommes, ont une portée universelle, parce que l'homme veut toujours le tout. Et c'est pourquoi, au-delà encore du signe médiateur, l'intention initiale qui veut plus que les solutions partielles à une portée encore plus universelle: l'intention initiale ou volonté voulante veut l'infini." Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p. 322.

⁹²Action, p. 222.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴L'Action(1893), p. 238.

⁹⁵Action, p. 228.

⁹⁶L'Action(1893), p. 240.

⁹⁷The universal maxim suggested here differs radically from the formal intentionality inherent in Habermas' universal pragmatics of communicative action. See Jürgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp. 1-68.

¹⁰⁰Action, p. 234.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 237-38.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 238.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 239.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 240. "Ainsi grâce à l'action vécue - à la pratique littéraire, dit encore Blondel -, l'homme prend conscience non seulement de sa subjectivité mais encore de sa société, de son besoin de relation et d'expansion sociales". Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p. 316.

¹¹²Action, p. 242.

¹¹³Cf. Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale dans l'oeuvre de Maurice Blondel, p. 141.

¹¹⁴"To be sure, if one went to the bottom of all this obliging attention, solicitude, and generosity of mutual affection, if starting from the acts, following the tenuous thread of involuted rationalizations, one went back to the

principle of the unseen sentiments, one would be surprised, as most moralists have been, at the disguised self-love that is at play, under a surface of goodness and abnegation. Thus, when we weep over a separation, it is over ourselves that we weep. But self-love sees better still than the moralists. It suspects that true affection felt for another brings more satisfaction than an egoism too much in a hurry to enjoy itself. Since the end knowingly sought does not exhaust the desire, since action ordinarily surpasses any definite intention, it follows that the profound causes of an act and even its effects may seem to fall under the law of selfinterest, even though the agent himself may not be selfinterested." Action, pp. 242-43.

¹¹³Ibid. , p. 244.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid. , p. 245.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid. "Remarquons... que l'amour est une forme privilégiée du déploiement de l'action médiatrice. L'amour va à l'infini." Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p. 324.

¹²⁰Action, p. 245.

¹²¹"La conception blondélienne de l'amour conjugale et, partant, du mariage, est d'inspiration chrétienne: le mariage est ainsi défini comme une institution de nature à caractère religieux; il est essentiellement un sacrement. Le philosophe va même jusqu'à soutenir que, dans la hiérarchie des voies empruntées par l'homme pour s'acheminer vers sa destinée, le mariage se situe à un niveau secondaire de dignité.", Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale dans l'oeuvre de Maurice Blondel, p. 143.

¹²²Action, p. 246.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 147.

¹²⁶Action, p. 248.

¹²⁷Blondel opposes essentially the views of French sociologists of his day, notably, Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl, and Espinas. See Action et vie sociale, pp. 115-126. "Une nation est, aux yeux de Blondel, bien autre chose qu'un organisme obéissant aux lois physico-biologiques de la nature et dont les individus ne seraient que des monades cellulaires." Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 149.

¹²⁰Action, p. 249. "La société nationale, elle, a son vinculum substantiale propre; elle ne résulte pas d'une association d'intérêts, de sentiments, d'habitudes. Dépassant ce qui est de l'ordre des phénomènes, elle se fonde sur ce qu'il y a d'essentiel dans la nature humaine et de métaphysique dans la volonté profonde qui, en chaque homme, constitue un des ressorts impossible à supprimer et indispensable au développement de sa destinée". L'Action II, p. 274.

¹²⁰Action, p. 249.

¹³⁰Jacques Flamand makes an interesting comment: "Le silence partiel de Blondel sur la complexité des dynamismes sociaux par lesquels s'expriment les individus, s'explique d'abord par le fait qu'il n'a pas voulu tout dire dans L'Action; et d'autre part, il ne faut pas oublier que la sociologie et la psychologie sociale n'en étaient en 1893 qu'à leurs premiers balbutiements: la psychologie sociale n'avait pas alors conquis son autonomie par rapport à la sociologie, et celle-ci était encore trop imprégnée de préjugés positivistes ou scientistes", L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p. 330. Jean Ecole, however writes that Blondel "nous met toutefois en garde contre les abus du sociologisme qui, faisant de la société une réalité indépendante des individus, cherche en elle la source créatrice de toutes leurs activités et est ainsi amené à la considérer comme l'être par excellence, alors qu'en fait elle n'a d'existence que par les individus qui la composent, de telle sorte qu'elle ne peut se suffire ni s'achever en elle-même; car la vie sociale, comme la vie biologique et la vie psychologique qui la préparent, s'incorpore à l'histoire de l'univers entier". La Métaphysique de l'Etre dans la Philosophie de Maurice Blondel, (Louvain, Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1959), pp. 78-79.

¹³¹L'Action(1893), pp. 267-68.

¹³²Action, p. 254. "La vie sociale est objectivement nécessaire, mais cette nécessité n'est que la traduction extérieure de la volonté qui nous la fait chercher. Les phénomènes économiques et politiques sont la transposition sur le plan social du concours moral des volontés, les symboles de réalités subjectives". Raymond Saint-Jean, Genèse de L'Action, p. 152.

¹³³Action, p. 255. "On sait que la conception blondélienne de la société se déploie et n'est intelligible que dans le cadre de la destinée personnelle de chacun: le centre de la société se situe au centre de l'homme. En effet, l'homme est conçu comme un être en devenir et incapable de se suffire par lui-même; comme un centre de perspective et

d'initiative relatif à une réalité supérieure. Or, pour combler cette insuffisance, à tous les plans humains, Blondel pose la société comme un milieu et un moyen de développement. La société est le plus grand chef-d'œuvre que l'homme puisse construire; elle est une loi de sa nature, de sa raison et de sa liberté. Toutefois, à son tour, la société n'acquiert son véritable sens que si elle est dépassée et finalisée; car elle n'est pas une fin en soi comme le prétendent les thèses sociologistes, phalanstériennes et positivistes". Leo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale dans l'œuvre de Maurice Blondel, p. 119.

¹³⁴Bordeleau writes that "la société et l'individu ne suggèrent pas la même compréhension lorsqu'on les envisage sous l'angle d'un tout. La société en tant que telle constitue une synthèse formée d'un réseau de relations suscitées par les tous substantiels que sont les hommes. Dès lors, c'est en tant que tout relationnel qu'elle dépasse ses membres; sa richesse tient de la richesse des individus. Elle n'a donc pas à prétendre à l'état d'un être consistant parce que ce qui n'est pas un unum ne saurait être un ens". Par ailleurs, la notion d'individu n'implique pas d'elle-même l'aspect de partie, mais plutôt une unité d'être selon un mode d'exister qui convient aux singuliers, et qui doit être ménagée avec les réserves exigées par les règles de l'analogie. Ainsi, l'individu se réfère à l'ordre substantiel. Ce n'est pas le cas de la société. En outre, l'individu et la personne constituent les deux aspects d'une seule et même unité concrète: l'homme. Par conséquent, lorsqu'on envisage l'homme comme partie par rapport à la société, c'est en tant que membre exerçant une fonction suivant ses capacités et sa compétence. L'homme conserve toujours une primauté ontologique et, partant, axiologique". Action et vie sociale, p. 120.

¹³⁵L'Action (1893), p. 272.

¹³⁶Action, p. 257.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 258. Elsewhere Blondel has this to say: "La patrie n'est point constituée comme un corps amorphe ou comme un organe de transition dans l'évolution générale de la vie sociale; elle a une suffisance relative, une organisation nécessaire. C'est pour cela, on va mieux le voir, qu'elle ne résulte pas d'une convention plus ou moins arbitraire, qu'elle ne dépend pas du caprice des membres qui la composent, et que l'autorité y est indispensable afin de répondre aux besoins qu'elle a mission de satisfaire. Le pouvoir, qui en est le lien synthétique et comme "la forme substantielle" reste l'expression de la volonté profonde qui fonde la nation elle-même. Et la forme politique dans laquelle l'autorité s'exerce manifeste l'action particulière des

circonstances et des libertés humaines dans la tradition de la vie nationale. Une société n'est donc jamais une société quelconque car elle se fonde toujours sur un sentiment très particulier et sur une volonté absolument concrète". L'Action II, pp. 282-83.

¹³⁸L'Action(1893), p. 274.

¹³⁹Action, p. 259. "La dialectique blondélienne donne à l'action une portée universelle qui la fait tendre vers l'infini, tout en pénétrant ce qu'il y a d'être et de pensée dans le monde; l'action est toute pénétrée d'infinitude. C'est pourquoi Blondel lui attribue une fonction compréhensive qui lui fait expérimenter tout ce qui peut activer son mouvement créateur d'une unité; en ce sens, l'action ... comporte une exigence de totalité". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 164.

¹⁴⁰Action, p. 261.

¹⁴¹L'Action(1893), p. 277. Cf. Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 165.

¹⁴²Action, p. 262.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. "La conscience morale pousse donc des racines empiriques et historiques. Elle se forme, au départ, par l'entrecroisement des forces inconscientes de la nature, par l'accumulation progressive et le triage d'un nombre indéfini d'expériences particulières et collectives. Or, de toutes ces données empiriques servant de tremplin et de conditions à l'action morale, la collectivité est la plus fondamentale, puisqu'elle constitue le plus vaste dépôt de valeurs capables d'orienter la conduite de l'individu. Tout comportement moral s'alimente aux actions du milieu ambiant, au contact des sensibilités et des intelligences, aux circonstances de la vie courante, aux intérêts vitaux, psychologiques, politiques et économiques, aux initiatives de tous genres; il se dessine et s'organise par la force discriminatoire du langage et de l'éducation". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 173. Jacques Flamand writes that "la morale naturaliste est trop proche du monde physique et biologique pour être digne de l'homme". Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p. 336.

¹⁴⁶Action, p. 264. "En fait, les traditions sont des milieux vivants, évolutifs et complexes, comportant une double fonction: d'une part, parce que l'individu reçoit

d'elles des éléments qui peuvent contribuer à sa promotion ou à sa dégradation, les traditions deviennent alors des sortes de condensés d'expériences exerçant une influence a posteriori; d'autre part, lorsque l'individu projette devant lui d'autres éléments pris comme des modèles ou des idéaux, les traditions participent de l'a priori sous forme d'idées organisatrices capables d'inspirer les actions les plus héroïques et les plus révolutionnaires". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 173. Blondel adds that "tout le mouvement de l'univers semble disposé en vue de permettre l'avènement des esprits capables d'orienter leur destinée et de faire du monde le théâtre de la moralité et le vestibule du temple de la vie spirituelle". L'Action II, p. 297.

¹⁴⁷Action, p. 265.

¹⁴⁸James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 184.

¹⁴⁹L'Action (1893), p. 282.

¹⁵⁰Action, p. 266.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Bordeleau writes this interesting comment on sociology's attempt to monopolize the issue of morality within its scientific framework: "On sait qu'à la fin du XIX^e siècle, les tentatives de morale scientifique se font insistantes. Leurs auteurs admettaient, comme postulat initial, la ruine de la métaphysique. Ils récusaient la démarche philosophique déductive parce qu'elle construisait d'abord un monde idéal, un ensemble de principes généraux pour, ensuite en tirer une morale pratique, souvent assortie d'une sorte de casuistique en vue d'améliorer les mœurs. Cette tentation inhérente au projet scientifique des sociologues de l'époque de théoriser et par suite de dogmatiser l'expérience parce que le monde intellectuel accordait plus de valeur aux œuvres théoriques qu'aux autres, répondait à un profond désir de régler les rapports des hommes entre eux; on croyait alors que la preuve scientifique entraînerait automatiquement l'ajustement du comportement humain sur le modèle proposé par la science; le seul fondement solide de la morale était donc à chercher dans la science. Même la division des esprits à ce sujet, les uns misant sur la biologie, les autres optant pour l'observation méthodique des mœurs, n'a réussi à faire dévier ces positions de leur trajectoire fondamentale. Toutefois, leur esprit scientifique les expose à réduire la morale à la science, et à omettre qu'on ne déduit pas le devoir-être". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p.

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¹⁵⁴ Action, p. 267.¹⁵⁵ Ibid.¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. "Or, Blondel conçoit autrement la tâche de celui qui pratique une science des mœurs. Cet homme de science n'a pas à inventer une morale attentif aux faits de mœurs, il les découvre insérés dans des systèmes de règles et de normes socialement établies; il constate qu'une sagesse populaire et des pratiques collectives s'expriment et se condensent dans des proverbes, des slogans et un certain comportement de base; il examine la connexion des actions et des réactions, les conditions positives d'existence et de fonctionnement des valeurs morales. En outre, vivement intéressée par le concret, la science des mœurs ne conserve son caractère scientifique qu'à la condition de se placer ... au point de vue du tout". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 175.

¹⁵⁸ Action, p. 270. This is why, as Bordeleau states it, "Le milieu ou la collectivité ne serait donc qu'une sorte de révélateur d'initiatives et de valeurs d'abord et avant tout personnelles; la morale ne commencerait pas avec la vie collective, comme le supposait Durkheim, mais avec l'homme concret". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 176.

¹⁵⁹ Action, p. 270.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 272. "La science des mœurs peut ainsi faire ressortir l'idée que le caractère obligatoire des actions humaines se forme dans un réseau d'interactions, et que le devoir ne peut être mesuré d'avance selon une règle purement logique. Pour Blondel, les problèmes de la pratique individuelle et sociale sont liés à une judication ultérieure; les données de l'expérience ne sont vraiment éclairantes que dans la mesure où elles peuvent être ratifiées par l'esprit. Voilà pourquoi, après avoir reconnu la nécessité provisoire du pluralisme sociologique, le philosophe juge que la morale scientifique, naturaliste et utilitaire, masque un dépassement d'elle-même; elle n'est qu'un moment, le premier, dans l'évolution de la conscience morale". Léo-Paul bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 177.

¹⁶¹ Action, p. 272.¹⁶² "What is true, original, and efficacious in

metaphysics can be summed up ... in the three propositions.... (1) Metaphysics has an experimental ground; it is nourished from the whole of reality. (2) It subordinates actual facts to facts which are not, in the positive sense, that the former are; it prolongs the world of nature into a world of thought that becomes for it the reason and the law. (3) What is not, it affirms and practices so that it will be; the act thus becomes a naturalization of the possible in the real. Metaphysics, therefore, is a dynamic. It starts from facts, to return to facts, but to facts of a higher order. It leads man inevitably to draw the principle of his conduct elsewhere than from the universe". M. Blondel, Action, pp. 272-73.

¹⁶²L'Action(1893), pp. 291-92.

¹⁶⁴Action, p. 274.

¹⁶⁵L'Action(1893), p. 293.

¹⁶⁶Action, p. 274. Bordeleau reminds us that "Le projet blondélien consistera à penser l'expérience morale par-delà les limites de la raison formelle; sa démarche se sert du moment formaliste comme d'une étape nécessaire à franchir et à dépasser". Action et vie sociale, p. 177.

¹⁶⁷Action, pp. 274-75.

¹⁶⁸Action, p. 275.

¹⁶⁹L'Action(1893), p. 294.

¹⁷⁰Action, p. 277.

¹⁷¹Ibid. Bordeleau puts the issue in this manner: "L'expérience morale sollicite donc l'éclairage d'une nouvelle forme de pensée, que Blondel nomme métaphysique. Mais, on vient de le constater, cette métaphysique pousse des racines dans le donné empirique et la vie morale, alors même qu'elle a la tâche de découvrir la vérité de ce donné, de manifester son insuffisance, de le fonder; ... elle est donc une étape sur le parcours de la phénoménologie de l'action. Cette solidarité de la pensée spéculative avec l'expérience, sa tâche purement réflexive et critique, ne signifient pas la perte de son autonomie. En réalité, aux yeux de Blondel, elles se contrôlent et se rectifient l'une l'autre". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, pp. 178-79.

¹⁷²Action, p. 278.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Ibid. "Ainsi, née de la disproportion entre ce que l'homme veut être et ce qu'il fait, la pensée métaphysique se constitue médiatrice entre le donné et le transcendant. Elle forme les idées directrices qui seront pour l'action volontaire un éclairage et une invitation à poursuivre d'une manière consciente et délibérée l'objectif déjà convoité". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 179. "Sans doute, la métaphysique en tant que principe réfléchi d'action est consistante et nécessaire, car elle repose sur la synthèse a priori de l'agir: idéalement, si la synthèse est simplement formalisée, réellement, si elle est agie et vécue moralement. Mais cette métaphysique, bonne, est insuffisante, car elle ne connaît qu'à la lumière naturelle du sujet agissant, de l'agent moral qui avait pu par ses propres forces rationnelles et morales réaliser les structures nécessaires de l'action et de l'être". Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p.339.

¹⁷⁵L'Action(1893), p. 298.

¹⁷⁶Action, p. 279. "Pour comprendre cette étape nouvelle, il importe de ne pas négliger les résultats acquis, c'est-à-dire les moments naturaliste et rationnel dans la formation d'une conscience morale; ils en sont les assises indispensables. En effet, la science des mœurs se chargeait d'inventorier les matériaux de l'expérience morale et de mesurer leur degré d'influence dans le comportement de l'homme; la métaphysique, pour sa part, plaçait les vrais motifs de la conduite humaine ailleurs que dans les faits; elle élevait le droit au-dessus du fait et fixait un idéal. Mais ces deux opérations nécessaires, même si elles s'alimentent tant à l'expérience concrète qu'à l'aspiration profondément spirituelle de l'homme, ne constituent pas encore la morale; elles l'ébauchent tout au plus. Cependant, grâce à elles, un sentiment de l'obligation pratique se dresse comme un impératif devant la volonté; l'idéal, dégagé des faits sans en être un pur dérivé, devient un devoir". Léo-Paul Bordeleau, Action et vie sociale, p. 181.

¹⁷⁷Action, p. 280.

¹⁷⁸Ibid. , p. 279. Thus conceived, duty cannot be reduced to being, nor be deducted from being. See, Bordeleau, p. 181.

¹⁸⁰L'Action(1893), p. 300.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Action, p. 281.

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴L'Action(1893), p. 301.

¹⁸⁵Action, p. 282.

¹⁸⁶Ibid. Bordeleau writes that "si le devoir s'exprime sur un mode impératif, il n'en garde pas moins un aspect optatif; car, ce que l'homme se commande correspond au fond à ce qu'il souhaite et à ce qu'il veut; le dynamisme spirituel de l'homme est la source réelle de la véritable obligation morale". Action et vie sociale, p. 182. Michel Jouhaud points out that "le devoir selon Kant est strict, rigoureux, austère; mais il lui manque la générosité qui fait confiance à l'avenir, il lui manque ce que Blondel appelle le sursum, il lui manque le dynamisme. De là cette idolâtrie de la morale et ce nouveau pharisaïsme de la vertu rationnelle auxquels revient Kant, après avoir tant fait pour renverser le pharisaïsme extrinséciste". Le Problème de l'Etre et l'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, p.212

¹⁸⁷This is the key element of the entire Blondelian corpus. It is the cement of the unfolding becoming of all being, real and ideal. It mediates and solidifies all becoming, that is, syntheses upon antecedent syntheses which never disappear in the Hegelian manner.

¹⁸⁸Action, p. 282.

¹⁸⁹L'Action(1893), p. 303.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Moral truth, in the way it is understood here, is a living synthesis, not a grammar of rules.

¹⁹²The concern ~~is~~ with morality above and beyond that of formal rationality.

¹⁹³Action, p. 283.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 285.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.: "What man cannot grasp, express, or produce, is precisely what he projects outside of himself to make it the object of a cult, as if in his inability to touch it within himself, he hoped to reach it better by placing it in the 'infinite': Ibid.

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

²⁰⁰Ibid.

²⁰¹Ibid. Blondel also states that "the object of cult ... like a mirror wherein the will can reflect its full image ... is only an occasion for the will to know itself ... as man comes to recognize in it an image of his own nature and a more inward need of his consciousness". Ibid. Louis Lavelle has maintained that the myth of Narcissus expresses the impossibility of the soul to know itself; that what Narcissus saw was simply a reflection, an appearance of himself in the spring, not his true self. Therefore man must forget himself and consequently participate in the reality, both inner and outer, as the answer to the problem of his destiny. "It would thus seem that sincerity alone is capable of resolving the duality of object and subject which philosophers have made the supreme condition of all knowledge. If Narcissus went down to destruction, it was because he actually tried to create this duality in his very being. For he thought he could see himself and enjoy himself before he had acted and before he had made himself. He lacked the courage to engage upon the splendid and unique venture wherein action precedes being and determines it ..."; Louis Lavelle, The Dilemma of Narcissus, trans. William Gairdner, (London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Humanities Press, 1973), p. 64. Melville warns us of the dangers of the inner vision of the "young Platonists" who take "the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every dimly discovered, uprising fin of some undiscernible form, seems to him the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it. In this enchanted mood, thy spirit ebbs away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space.... But while this sleep, this dream is on ye, move your foot or hand an inch; slip your hold at all; and your identity comes back in horror. Over Cartesian vortices you hover. And perhaps, at mid-day, in the fairest weather, with one half-throttled shriek you drop through that transparent air into the summer sea, no more to rise for ever. Heed it well, ye Pantheists!" Herman Melville, Moby Dick, p. 136. And like Pip the cabin boy who fell and became lost at sea the self loses itself "in the middle of such a heartless immensity" where "the sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul". Ibid. p. 321.

²⁰²Action, p. 289. "The obscure feeling that there is a subjective infinite ... something divine ... in each one of man's acts, inclines him to spread this divine element into the whole of his life". Ibid., p. 288.

²⁰³L'Action(1893), p. 309.

²⁰⁴Action, p. 289. "Ritual ends up by enveloping
all of man and all of his conduct, from birth to death".
Ibid.

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 290.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸L'Action(1893), p. 312.

²⁰⁹Action, p. 293.

²¹⁰Somerville offers this comment: "Even in 1893, when Blondel published L'Action, there was a secular protest against the austere cult of the moral imperative and against the metaphysical idol of systems that characterized the postHegelian period. Blondel calls it the new-mysticism. It was not a religious revival, although it was sympathetic to the superstitions of the past, to symbolique rites, sacramental forms, and mythological interpretations, while remaining radically irreligious. Blondel does not name names, but there can be little doubt that he has in mind people like Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) and certain of his followers, among whom one might include André Gide, whose Les nourritures terrestres (1897) was to be symptomatic of the times". Total Commitment, pp. 198-99.

²¹¹Again, Somerville makes some interesting observations: "Central to the new mysticism was the familiar notion that the object of every act is void. But the more one stresses the nothingness of the object, following the Kantian epistemological agnosticism, the greater is the subjective plenitude. The adept does not submit to any of the accepted rules of moral conduct, but insists on the importance of action uninhibited by ethical restrictions. What one does is of little moment as long as experience feeds the self, as long as one has a feeling for life. One knows, of course, as do the dilettantes and nihilists of every age, that every act is futile, but it is better consciously to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp than not to act.... But this cult of action for its own sake is a thinly disguised cult of the self, and it become the superstition of those who seek to triumph over insufficiency by magnifying their own versatility". Total Commitment, p. 199.

²¹²Somerville writes that "those who seek the absolute in phenomena find there, not an ever-retreating noumenon, not the substance of things hoped for, but the void". Total Commitment, p. 199.

²¹³L'Action (1893), p. 318.

²¹⁴Action, p. 297. "The attempt to confiscate or appropriate this deep exigency and confine it to a religion within the limits of reason and nature alone represents the last desperate effort of superstitious action". J. Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 200.

²¹⁵L'Action (1893), p. 319.

²¹⁶Action, p. 298.

²¹⁷L'Action (1893), p. 321.

²¹⁰Action, p. 299.

²¹¹Ibid.

²¹²Ibid., p. 297.

²¹³Blondel's concern is well put when he states: "What an inextricable difficulty the human will has gotten itself caught in and backed itself into. Call to mind now all the conclusions that already close off every escape route. Impossible not to raise the problem to be content with the something in which we tried to enclose ourselves. Where can we go? The phenomenon does not suffice man; we cannot restrict ourselves to it, or deny it. Will we find, through a solution that seems necessary and yet inaccessible, a salvation?" Action, p. 299.

²¹⁴"The immense order of phenomena where man's life spreads itself out seems to have been exhausted and human willing is not. The pretention it has of being self-sufficient aborts, but not out of penury. It aborts because in what we have willed and done up to now, that which wills and acts remains always higher than what is willed and done". Action, p. 300. Somerville comments: "We have seen that there can be no negative solution to the problem of action. We have also been careful to purify the science of action by postponing indefinitely the ontological question regarding the 'being' of phenomena and of action. Yet, by the method of residues, it now becomes clear that there is something in action that is not simply a phenomenon nor a directly ascertainable fact. If this irreducible surplus has any scientific value, it is not because it is a fact, like any other fact, but a necessity which is left over after exploring the total determinism of thought and life. The time has come, then, for man to take a stand and face the great option We have come to the end of the phenomenology of action, and must now seek to determine whether there is a being of action, and whether it is necessary". Total Commitment, p. 201.

²¹⁵Action, pp. 302-303.

²¹⁶Ibid., p. 305.

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸Blondel emphasizes the price of deeds that forever looms upon us from the past: "Who has not felt, even to the point of anguish, the contradiction of a past that seems dead only to be sealed and irrevocable like a last will.... the stain remains". Action, pp. 306-7.

²²⁷Ibid. , p. 309.

²²⁸Ibid. , p. 310. "For Blondel, the metaphysical order is not outside the will as an extraneous end to be attained, but is contained within the will as a means to move beyond. It does not represent a truth already constituted in fact, but presents to thought what one wishes to will, that is, an ideal object. It thus expresses not an absolute and universal reality, but the universal aspiration of a particular will". John J. McNeill, "Blondel on the Subjectivity of Moral Decision Making", Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 45, 1974, p. 212.

²²⁹Action, p. 310. Blondel also remarks that "we understand the fact of dying only because we have an implicit certitude of living on". Ibid. Duméry's comments are noteworthy: "Impossible de reculer, impossible d'avancer seul, telle est la leçon de la philosophie de l'insuffisance. Leçon non pas négative, mais positive et enrichissante pour la raison, puisqu'en nous épargnant les impasses et les fausses sorties, elle nous révèle les conditions de possibilité du vrai salut". Henry Duméry, La Tentation de Faire du Bien, (Paris:Seuil, 1956), p. 210.

²³⁰Action, p. 311.

²³¹Ibid. , p. 312. "La genèse de la religion ou plutôt, comme pour la métaphysique, de l'attitude religieuse, avait commencé par la position et l'auto-critique de l'action superstitieuse; elle se poursuit par l'aveu de cet échec. Ce qui précède n'est donc encore qu'une étape qui nous introduit à une nouvelle phase. Mais comme la revue des phénomènes est désormais épuisée et que l'action superstitieuse, avec la prétention qu'elle exprime d'enclore la transcendance en quelque objet empirique, marque l'arrêt du mouvement qui animait leur énumération progressive, la nouvelle phase dialectique qui amorce ne peut plus être, comme les précédentes, un simple dépassement où les contrariétés étaient résolues, paisiblement en somme, par enveloppement et par émergence; la contradiction devant laquelle elle nous place se présente enfin cette fois comme un conflit décisif". Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Etre et l'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, p. 276.

²³²L'Action(1893), pp. 338-39.

²³³Action, p. 313. "Mais, quel que soit le sort définitif que la dialectique de l'action assigne à la philosophie ou à la mythologie du néant, il résulte de la démarche blondélienne que Dieu est atteint, ou plutôt, puisque seule l'option effective conduit à une connaissance

possédante, pressenti, come le principe de médiation qui se révèle indispensable entre nous-mêmes et nous-mêmes, si notre déchirure interne est bien telle qu'il a été dit. Ce nom d'unique nécessaire qui le désigne se justifie par deux motifs. Il a d'abord l'avantage de résumer la direction par où se fait l'approche de Dieu dans le blondélisme. Plus précisément, dans une méthode qui s'attache, en tout ordre de phénomènes, à discerner l'invariant qui caractérise cet ordre indépendamment des variations infinies qui en différencient les détails, c'est bien comme unique nécessaire que le divin se signale malgré la diversité des formes religieuses, en tout état d'âme, à tout degré de la civilisation. Mais ce terme, qui peut s'entendre ainsi en un sens essentiel et universel, transcendant aux expériences religieuses multiples, mais, par la même, un peu pauvre, a aussi été employé historiquement par une tradition religieuse et théologique précise qu'il suffira désormais à Blondel d'évoquer par allusion, ce qui le dispensera de l'exposer ex professo et de développer, par exemple, une théorie des attributs de Dieu qui interromprait le fil de l'Action. Pas plus ici que dans l'analyse de l'expérience morale, des tendances qui s'y manifestent, des stratifications qui s'y déposent et des formes étagees qui s'y relaient, l'auteur ne doit se substituer à ceux qui ont élaboré la tradition dont il parle; il doit montrer, dans la perspective phénoménologique adoptée, comment cette tradition s'intègre au développement de l'action et y trouve naturellement sa place. Il ne cherchera pas davantage à formuler quelque preuve nouvelle de l'existence de Dieu, et sa métaphysique n'a, en ce sens, aucune originalité; il lui suffira de reprendre dans leur principe, en laissant de côté détails et variantes, les arguments classiques, supposés connus, et de montrer comment ils sont portés par le mouvement préalable et la dialectique interne de l'action, lieux d'une expérience vécue qui sous-tend leur formulation intellectuelle. Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Etre et l'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, pp. 279-80.

²⁰⁴ Action, p. 314.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 315. "Cet 'unique nécessaire' m'est à la fois transcendant et immanent, plus présent à moi que je ne le suis à moi-même; en moi, mais pas de moi, sinon l'immanence serait pervertie en immanentisme". Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, pp. 342-43.

²⁰⁶ Action, p. 315. Of this "hypothèse nécessaire", Duméry maintains that "c'est donc à l'infini qu'elle cherche sa propre équation: superstition d'idolâtrer comme suffisant le produit d'une volonté qui, jamais satisfaite, triomphe de l'insuffisance de tout. A qui veut infiniment seul l'infini

peut être un repos. En vain l'esprit tentera-t-il de se recourber sur lui-même pour borner son aspiration. Il emplit d'infini toutes ses pensées et tous ses désirs. Reconnu ou méconnu, son idéal reste projeté devant lui comme un invincible aimant: on ne renie pas une fin de nature. D'ailleurs, le Dieu qu'il découvre au fond et au delà de lui-même est une générosité inaccessible, mais non pas limitable. Le rapport de l'esprit à Dieu est donc ouvert dans les deux sens. Il est possible que ce rapport naturel ne soit pas transmué en relation surnaturelle, puisque Dieu est libre de se donner, mais il est possible qu'il le soit, il est nécessaire qu'il puisse l'être. C'est même cette nécessaire possibilité qui fait tout l'élan de l'esprit". Henry Duméry, La Philosophie de L'Action: Essai sur L'Intellectualisme Blondélien, avec une préface de Maurice Blondel, (Paris: Aubier, éditions Montaigne, 1948), pp. 143-44.

²²⁷ Kierkegaard resolved it with a 'leap of faith'; for Blondel, a Catholic, such an irrational intent would not solve the problem. Against Kierkegaard, Blondel would maintain that religious action is incarnated and related to the historical Church and tradition. Cf. "Blondel invece, nulla togliendo alla serietà religiosa ed esistenziale de Kierkegaard, trova delle totalità (particolari) dappertutto; e così trova anche dappertutto presente l'opzione religiosa che queste totalizzazioni implicano. Ciò vuol dire - toccando e dirimendo una delle questioni più controverse nell'interpretazione de Blondel - che l'opzione religiosa per lui non si fa mai allo stato puro, 'come tale', ma sempre in modo più o meno implicito, con più o meno lucidità di coscienza, nelle azioni e nelle decisioni concrete e particolari; anzi proprio per mezzo di esse. Il che significa che l'opzione religiosa stessa sarà sempre 'incarnata': avrà un 'corpo' di attività, di condizionamenti, di conseguenze nelle quali si esprime. Ecco perché quanto Blondel dice sulla 'litteralità' della prassi religiosa, sul suo carattere comunitario, tradizionale, disciplinato, non costituisce affatto un appendice 'ad usum catholicorum', ma appartiene alla sostanza stessa del suo pensiero - mentre per Kierkegaard è altrettanto essenziale che la scelta di fede si faccia nel modo più solitario e disincarnato, 'in mare sopra un abisso de 70 mila braccia'. La fede blondelliana cambia il mondo, quella di Kierkegaard soltanto l'esistenza del credente". Peter Henrici, "Maurice Blondel di fronte alla filosofia tedesca", Gregorianum, 56, 1975, pp. 634-35.

²²⁸ "By unfolding into the universe, the will becomes more clearly conscious of itself and of its exigencies". Action, p. 317.

²²⁹ L'Action (1893), p. 343. "La contingence est expérimentée en nous et dans les phénomènes, objets de notre

action; mais l'action et les phénomènes ne sont pas rien.... Radicalement insuffisant, mais incontestablement réel, le contingent ne subsiste que par la médiation du nécessaire. Mais cette perspective, qui place le nécessaire au terme de toutes nos démarches vécues quelles qu'elle soient, modifie l'esprit de l'argument et lui donne une tout autre portée que celle qu'on lui attribue en général". Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Etre et l'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, p. 280.

²⁴⁰Action, p. 318.

²⁴¹Ibid. Cf. "Habitué que nous sommes à mouvoir nos idées et nos actes dans un monde de contingence et de relativité, nous croyons perdre pied et manquer d'air lorsque nous cherchons à passer dans cet intermode qui paraît à la fois relier et séparer l'ordre immanent et la transcendance divine dont aucun rapport vérifiable ne nous livre le secret. Comment dès lors parvenir à ce qui semble sans commune mesure avec nous? Et par où, sans nous égarer, nous évaderons-nous de nos représentations anthropomorphiques pour accéder au point de vue ontologique, mieux encore, à la perspective divine où 'la science de l'être en tant qu'être' nous appelle Jusque vers son faite suprême? On comprend donc l'embarras qui, aux approches d'une région, étrangère apparemment à notre expérience, fait osciller le philosophe entre des prescriptions contraires auxquelles il ne peut s'empêcher d'obéir tour à tour.... A supposer même - ou bien (comme d'ailleurs l'a fait le Stagirite) que le monde du devenir n'ait pas commencé et ne doive pas finir, - ou bien que la notion du temps est elle-même contemporaine du monde sans qu'il faille imaginer avant lui ce qui n'est qu'avec lui, il faut, en toute hypothèse maintenir que tout devenir implique réellement un principe de référence ou de production absolument transcendant (extérieur et supérieur) à ce qui est mu et changeant, sans quoi le mouvement et le changement, en tant que tels, ne seraient diversité, il est nécessaire qu'une force d'unité relie, soutienne, unifie ce mouvant processus. Il ne s'agit donc pas de 's'arrêter' comme pour attacher une longue suite d'anneaux à un crampon final auquel, de guerre lasse, on suspendrait une recherche prête à défaillir; il s'agit, à tous points du mouvement, d'affirmer l'absolue nécessité et la réalité effective de ce qui rend non seulement intelligible et possible; mais réel autant qu'explicable le déploiement d'un devenir qui, fut-il défini ou fini, n'en exige pas moins constamment une cause, à la fois immanente au mouvement et transcendante à la série totale". Maurice Blondel, L'Etre et les Etres, nouvelle édition, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p.165-66.

²⁴²Action, p. 318.

²⁴³L'Action(1893), pp. 344-45.

²⁴⁴Action, p. 319.

²⁴⁵Ibid. "L'identité de l'idéal et du réel est éprouvée par nous en certains moments privilégiés de l'expérience morale, mais d'une manière fugitive: signe de participation, auquel nous voyons que nous ne tirons pas de nous-mêmes notre lumière ni notre énergie". Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Etre et l'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, p. 281.

²⁴⁶Action, p. 320. Jean Ecole comments: "La tournure qu'il imprime, de ce fait, à sa preuve téléologique semble la rapprocher davantage de la preuve traditionnelle par les degrés de perfection que de la preuve par la finalité, encore qu'il est peut-être plus exact de dire qu'elle les télescope en un seul argument qui renouvelle ainsi, d'une façon originale, la manière de les présenter. Mais elle est aussi très proche parente de la preuve par la contingence, puisque c'est, dans l'une et dans l'autre, la constatation de la réalité insuffisante des êtres, qui amène l'esprit à en chercher le principe et le terme dans un Etre nécessaire et parfait qui leur soit à la fois immanent et transcendant, la preuve téléologique considérant la suffisance relative des êtres sous l'aspect particulier de beauté et d'harmonie qu'elle revet, aussi bien dans le monde physique et vivant, que dans celui de la pensée". Jean Ecole, La Métaphysique de l'Etre dans la Philosophie de Maurice Blondel, (Paris/Louvain: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1959), p. 95.

²⁴⁷L'Action(1893), p. 346.

²⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 346-47.

²⁴⁹Action, p. 321.

²⁵⁰L'Action(1893), p. 347.

²⁵¹Action, p. 322. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant had reduced all proofs to three: the ontological, the cosmological, and the teleological. Blondel's order is cosmological, teleological, and ontological; hence, he emphasizes the negated aspect of the arguments. See Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 214-15. "La preuve ontologique blondélienne ne ressemble donc en rien à ce qu'on appelle d'ordinaire l'argument ontologique attribué à saint Anselme, Descartes et Leibniz, et qu'on simplifie à l'extrême, sans tenir suffisamment compte des différences qui les séparent et, sans doute aussi, de leurs positions plus complexes, lorsqu'on prétend le ramener à

l'affirmation que Dieu existe nécessairement parce qu'il est, par définition, infiniment parfait et ne peut pas, de ce fait, ne pas exister. Car elle consiste, chez notre auteur, à synthétiser, en quelque sorte, l'ensemble des preuves apportées auparavant, et qui montrent que non seulement l'idée de Dieu n'est pas une fiction, mais qu'elle s'accompagne de la certitude rationnelle que Dieu existe réellement. Elle ressemble encore moins à la preuve de simple vue par laquelle Malebranche croyait atteindre l'essence divine, non pas sans doute telle qu'elle est en soi, mais 'en tant que relative aux créatures', car notre idée de Dieu, même précisée et justifiée par les preuves apportées à cet effet, reste incapable de nous faire 'saisir le mystère ontologique de Dieu en sa perfection essentielle et substantielle. Et c'est ce qui porte Maurice Blondel à déclarer, à propos de la preuve ontologique, mais cela vaut également de toutes les autres puisqu'elle les synthétise et les couronne.- qu'elle n'est qu'une 'ébauche', afin de souligner qu'elles nous amènent jusqu'au seuil du mystère de Dieu, mais sans pouvoir nous le faire découvrir et pénétrer, comme il l'explique aux derniers degrés de sa démonstration dans La Pensée". Jean Ecole, La Métaphysique de l'Etre dans la Philosophie de Maurice Blondel, pp. 99-100.

²⁵²Action, p. 322. Blondel insiste on the "impénétrabilité de l'essence de Dieu". See Jean Ecole, La Métaphysique de l'Etre, p. 100.

²⁵³Action, p. 322. "Le renouvellement de l'argument ontologique est préparé par le renouvellement des deux autres. L'ordre dans lequel on propose les différentes preuves n'est pas indifférent. La preuve ontologique ne doit pas être séparée des autres, ni présentée la première: car, dans ces hypothèses, l'idée de perfection, dont la marque logique est l'identité de l'essence et de l'existence, risque de paraître arbitraire et construite, ce qui réduirait l'argument, comme on le lui a si souvent reproché, à un exercice intellectuel. Mais l'idée de perfection est vécue plutôt que contemplée ou construite". Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Etre et l'expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, pp. 281-82. Jean Ecole argues that the role of the proofs "est de fonder rationnellement la certitude de son existence en purifiant et en critiquant l'obscur conviction qui accompagne, dès le début l'idée que nous en avons". Jean Ecole, La Métaphysique de l'Etre dans la Philosophie de Maurice Blondel, p. 101.

²⁵⁴Action, p. 322. "Or si c'est là un gain d'importance capitale que d'arriver, grâce à elles, à la certitude ferme et solidement démontrée que 'Dieu n'est pas un mot vide de sens', si ce résultat satisfait le besoin de notre raison de rattacher tout ce qui ne se suffit pas à sa

plein suffisance, il reste cependant que cette satisfaction ne nous contente pas pleinement. Non seulement, en effet, une fois que nous sommes convaincus de l'existence de Dieu, nous voudrions encore connaître son essence, mais nous aspirons en outre, comme le démontre, selon Maurice Blondel, l'analyse du sujet pensant, à entrer en rapports avec lui. En d'autres termes, ce que nous cherchons à trouver en Dieu, ce n'est pas seulement le principe rationnellement nécessaire requis par tout l'ordre contingent, mais aussi une réalité vivante dans l'intimité de laquelle nous aimerions entrer. Et c'est pourquoi, de même qu'il nous avait paru impossible de nous en tenir à notre idée de Dieu dans son état primitif, de même nous ne pouvons nous en contenter, même après l'avoir justifiée par la critique des preuves, et nous arrêter à celles-ci". Jean Ecole, La Métaphysique de l'Etre dans la philosophie de Maurice Blondel, pp. 101-2. Elsewhere Blondel has further observations: "Combien nous sommes loin de la vivante et belle réalité où la transcedance divine, en raison même de son inviolable pureté, pénètre au plus bas, au plus intime de toutes les opérations concrètes de la nature et de la pensée! Partout en effet nous cherchons, nous trouvons ces réalisations pour ainsi-dire physiques et organiques de la pensée, pour préparer, pour sous-tendre, pour ériger les formes supérieures de réflexion, bien différentes de simples représentations notionnelles, puisqu'elles participent en même temps à l'action constante de Dieu dans le monde, au sursum spontané de la nature, à l'effort conscient et élicite de la pensée personnelle. Nous ne saurions donc trop attirer l'attention du lecteur sur cette métaphysique concrète et réaliste qui, loin de se contenter d'analogies imaginatives et de concepts spéculatifs, nous attache aux incarnations progressives de la pensée à laquelle concourent partout et toujours, dans l'ordre du devenir, avec l'assistance initiale et concomitante de Dieu, sa propre spontanéité encore inconsciente et l'effort où s'éveille la personne pour la vie spirituelle". Maurice Blondel, La Pensée II. Les Responsabilités de la Pensée et la Possibilité de son Achèvement, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 208-9.

²⁵⁵ Action, p. 322.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 323.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. The problem of God cannot be resolved by a simple dialectical demonstration. Blondel is aware of the distinction between a noetic, rational, and abstract assent on the one hand, and the pneumatic, spiritual, and concret assent on the other hand - both complementary aspects of the intentionality of thought.

²⁵⁸ Action, p. 323.

²⁵⁹Action, p. 323. It is here, for the first time, that Blondel uses the word 'Being' rather than the 'one thing necessary'.

²⁶⁰Action, pp. 323-4. Blondel now uses the 3rd person pronoun, He, rather than the 'one thing necessary'. "Car c'est en tout ce qui est fini et contingent que se manifeste la présence de l'Infini, de telle sorte qu'il faut dire, en définitive, que notre certitude de Dieu repose sur Dieu lui-même, en ce sens que lui seul fonde notre aptitude à le connaître en déposant en nous l'idée que nous avons de lui-même, et nous aide, en outre, à contrôler et vérifier cette connaissance ou cette idée par la lumière dont il ne cesse de nous illuminer". Jean Ecole, La métaphysique de l'Etre dans la philosophie de Maurice Blondel, pp. 103-4.

²⁶¹Finally, for the first time, Blondel uses the name God. Action, p. 324. I may add that the switch from a philosophical mode of language-style to that of the theological is bold, but rendered possible, it seems in the eyes of Blondel, after presenting the proofs in the immanent style. The confidence with which Blondel presents the proofs allows him the security of going from the philosophical to the theological language.

²⁶²Action, p. 324.

²⁶³Ibid.

²⁶⁴L'Action (1893), p. 351.

²⁶⁵Ibid., p. 352.

²⁶⁶Action, p. 326.

²⁶⁷Ibid.

²⁶⁸Ibid. "Ainsi Dieu est découvert régressivement (ce qui donne sa place au raisonnement et exclut l'illumination affective) dans l'expérience de l'action vécue (ce qui enrachine le raisonnement et lui enlève l'apparence d'une simple exercice logique). Car on ne doit pas se dissimuler que dans l'approche philosophique du problème de Dieu, on se trouve pris dans une tenaille: si les 'preuves de Dieu métaphysique' laissent l'instant d'après, quand l'évidence actuelle s'est dissipée, une impression de verbalisme, tandis que les 'preuves de sentiment' paraissent suspectes a priori à la conscience philosophique, il semble qu'on soit renvoyé sans cesse du pensé au vécu et du vécu au pensée sans trouver de point ferme. Mais Blondel, en intégrant la recherche intellectuelle de Dieu à la dialectique de l'action, définit précisément un lien entre le

pensé et le vécu, qu'il appellera 'le lien de la connaissance et de l'action dans l'être'; il explique par l'avance que l'action et la connaissance prennent tour à tour dans l'approche, nécessairement dynamique, de l'Etre transcendant, l'instabilité de cette approche même et le va-et-vient continu du pensé au vécu, qui, loin d'être des étrangetés suspectes, se montrent désormais fondés sur la nature de la question. Cela doit permettre de situer la différence qui sépare la pensée blondélienne de la pensée kantienne. Le 'lien de la connaissance et de l'action dans l'être', Kant ne l'admet pas, comme l'atteste la dichotomie des raisons spéculative et pratique; c'est sans doute une des sources des difficultés du kantisme". Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Etre et l'Expérience morale chez Maurice Blondel, p. 286. Duméry writes that "les deux dialectiques gnoséologique et énergétique ne sont que le double aspect de lumière et de vie d'un même effort spirituel de réalisation". Henry Duméry, La Philosophie de l'Action, p. 171.

²⁶⁹ L'Action (1893), p. 354.

²⁷⁰ Action, p. 327.

²⁷¹ Ibid. Melville's character Father Mapple, in a church sermon, harbours a similar view when he says: "But all the things that God would have us do are hard for us to do - remember that and, hence, he oftener commands us than endeavors to persuade. And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists". Herman Melville, Moby Dick, p. 52. Jacques Flamand says that "l'option est donc un choix entre deux amours". L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p. 344. "... rien d'étonnant dès lors si, dans le drame de ce monde que saint Augustin trace en montrant les deux Cités constamment aux prises, l'une fondée sur l'amour de soi jusqu'au mépris de Dieu, l'autre sur le détachement et l'annihilation de soi jusqu'au triomphe de l'amour divin, les deux armées se recrutent, se mélangent et cherchent constamment à gagner l'une sur l'autre des adeptes dévoués jusqu'au suprême sacrifice". Maurice Blondel, Exigences Philosophiques du Christianisme, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), p. 251.

²⁷² Action, p. 327.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 328.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ L'Action (1893), pp. 355-56.

²⁷⁶ Action, p. 330..

277 Ibid. "Ce spectacle meme est bien fait pour manifester, à travers les apparences confuses ou tant d'esprits perdent le sens du drame dont ils sont les acteurs, l'immense enjeu et l'organisation secrète qui finira par ranger distinctement d'un côté ou de l'autre les belligérants de la guerre de ce monde". Maurice Blondel, Exigences Philosophiques du Christianisme, p. 251.

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¹⁷"Action, p. 330.

¹⁸"Ibid., p. 335. To affirm God does not change anything unless one returns to action. See Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 223.

¹⁹"Action, p. 340.

²⁰"L'Action(1893), p. 370. Blondel writes that "if dying to time teaches him what it is to live, it is because this life which does not pass away with time is exposed to a second death, the one that subsists forever". Action, p. 342.

²¹"Action, p. 342.

²²"L'Action(1893), p. 371.

²³"Action, p. 343.

²⁴"Ibid.

²⁵"Une création inachevée et en train de se faire: une création qui appelle des êtres à participer à cette genèse, à coopérer à leurs propre genèse et par la même à l'oeuvre totale de la création: une oeuvre qui n'a pas pour fin de poser dans l'existence des choses, ni des êtres fictifs, des poupées ou des automates, mais de susciter des êtres dignes de ce nom, à l'image et à la ressemblance de l'Être incréé, c'est-à-dire capables à leur tour de créer, capables d'action réelle et efficace, capables d'une option qui engage leur existence, leur destinée, capables de ratifier le don de l'existence, ou de le refuser, capables de devenir des dieux, invités à participer à la vie personnelle de Dieu: une telle entreprise n'est pas pensable, n'est pas possible, sans un risque. L'homme est remis entre les mains de son propre conseil. Dieu créateur ne peut eluder ce risque qui est la condition même de la création d'êtres divinissables. La grandeur du risque mesure la grandeur du dessein créateur. Il aurait été relativement simple de poser dans l'existence des êtres recevant l'existence d'une manière toute passive, et se contentant de brouter dans un jardin édenique. Il est plus difficile de créer des êtres pleinement êtres, capables d'être des cause, des créateurs, capables de ratifier le don qui leur est fait, de faire valoir le prêt qui leur est confié, capables de se conduire, non plus en esclaves mais en dieux. 'Vous êtes des dieux', dit un Psaume, cité par Jésus lui-même. Le dessein de la création, nous verrons Blondel l'exposer plus loin, ne se satisfait pas à moins. Le risque de perte est impliqué d'une manière inévitable dans ce dessein. À partir du moment où, réellement, sans tricher, un être est constitué capable

d'option, tenant en main pour une part les commandes et les leviers de la vie, la libre disposition de son existence et de sa destinée, une possibilité d'échec est incluse. Cette possibilité est la condition de la réalisation du plan créateur et divinisateur. Dieu ne peut créer des dieux de telle manière que ceux-ci n'aient qu'à accepter tout passivement le don qui leur est fait: ils ne seraient pas, dans ces conditions, des êtres à l'image et à la ressemblance de l'Être, ils seraient des poupées, heureuses peut-être, mais non béatifiées par la vie divine, car la vie de Dieu ne peut se communiquer qu'à un être capable de la recevoir, capable d'une option et d'une nouvelle naissance par laquelle il consent à ce don, le ratifie, coopère à sa propre genèse afin de devenir à son tour créateur et digne du don divin. La possibilité de l'enfer est l'œuvre du premier Amour. Une ontogenèse inachevée, ne peut se passer d'examiner cette possibilité d'échec, et la signification ontologique de l'enfer". Claude Tresmontant, Introduction à la métaphysique de Maurice Blondel (Paris: Seuil, 1963), pp. 155-56.

On Jan. 19th, 1888 Blondel writes in his diary: "Ce qui fait le bonheur, ce n'est pas ce qu'on a, c'est ce dont on se prive". Carnets Intimes II, p. 123.

Action, p. 347. Michel Jouhaud says that "l'homme moral selon Blondel, comme selon Kant, est le soldat du devoir". Le Problème de l'Être et l'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, pp. 370-71. However consider this comparison: Kant says that "the moral law leads to ... the recognition of all duties as divine commands". I. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. Lewis White Beck, 14th printing, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978) p. 134. Blondel writes that "duty is duty only to the extent that, intentionally, we obey in it a divine command". Action, p. 347. Both these quotes look almost identical; however in the Kantian sense of obedience, man retains the initiative and God waits for him whereas in Blondel's understanding of obedience, man concedes the initiative to an obliging God. See Michel Jouhaud, p. 371.

L'Action(1893), p. 379.

Action, p. 349.

L'Action(1893), pp. 379-80. In a letter to Edouard Le Roy (Nov. 16, 1905) Blondel made this point: "Plus j'y réfléchis, plus il me semble que nos divergences procèdent de cette cause très profonde: nous n'avons pas la même conception du surnaturel. Il semblerait presque que vous n'y voyez que le suprême épanouissement de notre nature et comme un couronnement de la divine destinée à laquelle nous sommes conviés, - destinée qui se réalise par l'harmonieux

développement de tout notre être; l'hétéronomie apparente se résout en une autonomie parfaite. Pour moi, au contraire, l'autonomie initiale de notre volonté a à accepter, à aimer l'hétéronomie réelle et irréductible de l'amour divin: d'où la destruction présente, la sujétion, la mortification, toutes les industries actuellement cruelles de la Volonté qui installe souverainement en nous son règne: et si l'on y réfléchit bien, l'on voit, l'on sent, qu'il s'agit d'une intrusion, d'une substitution, en nous, de l'Infini qui nous dilate, à nous faire crier de douleur: et c'est la vraie bonté. Dieu nous faisant à sa taille et ne se contentant pas de se faire à la nôtre. Dieu nous faisant chercher notre béatitude dans cette joie d'ETRE POUR LUI, (et c'est la vérité immuable), non dans l'ambition de l'AVOIR POUR NOUS, ce qui est le surcroît, d'autant plus doux qu'il est une reciproque qui ne serait pas sans la proposition directe". Maurice Blondel, Lettres Philosophiques, (Paris: Aubier, Éditions Montaigne, 1961), p. 258.

---Action, p. 350.

---Ibid.

---Ibid., p. 351.

---Ibid. — p. 352.

---Ibid., p. 353. Of this quote Michel Jouhaud offers this comment: "Isolée de tout contexte, en effet, cette formule risque de faire songer à un empirisme à la William James, ou ce qui serait pire, à un illuminisme: car les sectes ne manquent pas, qui voient dans une expérience plus affective que structurée une source de révélation. Mais ce danger n'existe pas si l'on replace la formule dans son contexte blondélien. La mortification, telle que la conçoit l'auteur de l'Action, est bien une expérience, mais postulée par la structure transcendentale de la volonté. Cette structure, sans doute, échappe généralement à celui qui vit l'expérience dans la simplicité d'une conscience droite bien qu'ignorante". Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Être et l'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, p. 375.

---Action, p. 354.

---Ibid.

---Ibid., p. 356.

---Ibid. Albert Poncelet writes that "to utilize God's transcendence or accept it, only to undergo it passively means to destroy it, and with it the origin, the heart and the future of human action. In that event we would only.

under the pretext of freedom become the victims of a manifold degrading heteronomy. The only way to live up meaningfully to the mysterious transcendence which operates in the immanence of our action is by freedom, which gives and surrenders itself autonomously to this divine mystery. Only freedom because it emerges from the finest and most noble core of activity itself, is capable of throwing a real bridge towards the inevitable transcendence. Only freedom can try to encounter the inaccessible God". Albert Poncelet, "The Christian Philosophy of Maurice Blondel", International Philosophical Quarterly, 5, 1965, p. 587.

su.1 Action, p. 356.

su.2 Ibid. , p. 357.

su.3 L'Action (1893), p. 388.

NOTES: CHAPTER V

¹F. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9 Part 1, p. 54.

²Jean Guilton, Regards sur la pensée française, 1870-1940, pp. 67-68.

³René Lacroze, Maine de Biran, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), p. 28.

⁴George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, (Paris: Boivin & Co., 1937), p. 25.

⁵George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 26.

⁶Ibid. , p. 28.

⁷Ibid. , p. 29. "L'homme, en effet, réunissant en lui deux sortes de facultés et comme deux sortes de vies, participe aussi à deux systèmes de lois. Comme être organisé et simplement sentant, son existence absolue se compose de plusieurs fonctions internes, auxquelles correspondent autant d'espèces d'affections immédiates qui constituent son instinct et déterminent ses premiers mouvements automatiques d'une manière aussi sûre et aussi infaillible qu'elle est aveugle. Mais en sa qualité de personne individuelle agissante ou morale, l'homme est doué de plus d'une vie de relation et de conscience: non seulement il vit et il sent, mais il a encore l'aperception de son existence et le sentiment ou l'idée de sa sensation; non seulement il a ou soutient des rapports avec tout ce qui l'environne, mais encore il aperçoit ces rapports, les distingue entre eux et des choses comparées; il fait plus, il se crée à lui-même de nouveaux rapports par lesquels il étend et agrandit son existence dans l'exercice continu d'une activité, d'une puissance d'effort qui lui soumet la nature extérieure et avant elle les instruments sensibles au moyen desquels il en perçoit les phénomènes. Tous les modes que cette puissance produit ou auxquels elle coopère, ont seuls ce caractère de redoublement intérieur qui les approprie à la conscience et en détermine l'aperception. Tout ce qui se passe, au contraire, dans les organes sensitifs hors de la sphère d'activité propre et naturelle de la même puissance, demeure au rang obscur d'impression organique ou d'affection animale

sans se répéter comme idée ou perception dans le sens intime, sans s'élever à la hauteur du moi". Maine de Biran. De l'aperception immédiate, ed. J. Echeverria, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1963), p. 115. in L'Effort, textes choisis et présentés par A. Drevet, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), p. 36.

"George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 36. "à cette époque, le jeune Maine de Biran se cherche et se trouve à travers Rousseau". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversations de Maine de Biran, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1947), p. 17.

"In the history of civilization there is an important group of thinkers whom Sainte-Beuve once called la famille des méditatifs intérieurs. These various thinkers were all concerned with showing that one's internal experiences of emotion, willing, and thinking are radically different from sense experience of the external world. Moreover, they tried to show that such internal experience as an ultimate and unique source of knowledge is of great importance to philosophy. Though the members of this family differed among themselves in various ways, they were unanimous in their conviction that to neglect this source of knowledge, or to try to explain it away by tracing its origins to sense experience, is to treat too lightly the most important area of human experience". Philip P. Hallie, "Hume, Biran and the Meditatifs Intérieurs", Journal of the History of Ideas, 18. No. 3, 1957, pp. 295-96.

"Ibid. . pp. 298-300.

"The true method will start rather with the 'primitive fact' of the moi, the intuition of self-hood, and proceed thereafter by the light of the sens intime, or method of internal observation and experiment - a psychological enterprise of experimental self-observation of a kind altogether different from that of the idéologues". Bernard Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France, p. 140.

"George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 44. In de Biran's estimate "effort lies at the root of all consciousness". B. Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, p. 41. Reardon continues to say that this was "a new type of spiritualistic philosophy, grounded not in la pensée but in le vouloir", Ibid. , p. 141.

"George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 52. Henri Gouhier, Les Conversations de Maine de Biran, pp. 9899.

¹⁴"An example of this comes from Rousseau: "Alone for the rest of my life, since it is only in myself that I find consolation, hope and peace of mind, my only remaining duty is towards myself and this is all I desire.... But though my body is idle, my mind remains active and continues to produce feelings and thoughts, indeed its inner moral life seems to have grown more intense with the loss of all earthly or temporal interests.... Such an exceptional situation is certainly worth examining and describing, and it is to this task that I am devoting my last days of leisure.... I shall perform upon myself the sort of operation that physicists conduct upon the air in order to discover its daily fluctuations. I shall take the barometer readings of my soul, and by doing this accurately and repeatedly I could perhaps obtain results as reliable as theirs". Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Reveries of the Solitary Walker, (Middlesex, New York: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 32-33.

¹⁵"Ce n'est pas l'habitude même qui intéresse Maine de Biran, mais l'usage qu'il en fait pour la recherche passionnées d'un centre d'activité au milieu du flottement des états". Emile Bréhier, Histoire de la Philosophie III, p. 549. "Comme Rousseau, Biran estime que Condillac méconnaît l'activité propre à la vie en réduisant les instincts à des habitudes acquis. Ici encore, c'est Bonnet qui lui fournit la mise au point technique de sa critique. Dans les oeuvres de celui-ci, l'instinct se manifeste par des mécanismes liés à la structure de l'animal et jouant sans conscience de la fin poursuivie; mais ces mécanismes expriment une activité essentielle à l'être organisée et le naturaliste leibizien admet que l'existence de l'âme des brutes est au moins probable". Contre Condillac, Maine de Biran accepte et reproduit sa description. Ce qui le gêne, toutefois, c'est que, pour d'autres motifs, il juge compromis le dualisme entre 'l'âme sensitive' et 'l'âme raisonnable', comme il disait en lisant l'Essai analytique. Condillac et Bonnet sont trop tentés de les mettre en continuité, le premier aux dépens du 'principe vital', le second, aux dépens de la volonté". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, p. 104.

¹⁶George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 68. "... l'homme est double. D'un côté, il se voit passif, assujéti aux impressions qui l'assaillent, écrasé sous leur nombre et souvent entraîné par elles; mais, par ailleurs, il est actif, il possède une force libre, capable de se déterminer et d'agir par elle-même, indépendante de toute impulsion extérieure: et la vie est faite du conflit de ces deux forces. Maine de Biran a, personnellement souffert de cette lutte". Ibid.

¹⁷"Deux préoccupations dominent les premiers

recherches de Maine de Biran sur la science de l'homme: unir la psychologie à la physiologie et savoir quelle est exactement l'activité de l'esprit. C'est pourquoi il s'écarte de Condillac et se rapproche de Bonnet, acceptant les schémas rigoureusement parallélistes de l'Essai analytique et substituant au principe trop simple de la sensation transformée le dualisme de l'activité et de la sensibilité. Or, poser une activité irréductible à la sensibilité ne lui suffit pas: si elle lui reste subordonnée, elle ne sera qu'une apparence: le dualisme doit être poussé jusqu'à celui de deux vies distinctes de sorte que, conformément au témoignage du sens intime, la volonté ait vraiment sa source en elle-même.... Or, Biran ne reproche en aucune manière à Condillac d'être trop spiritualiste en n'étant pas assez physiologiste; pas davantage il ne soupçonne Bonnet de matérialisme à cause de sa confusion entre les opérations de l'âme pensante et celles de l'âme animale. Spiritualisme et matérialisme ne sont pas des attitudes de philosophes modernes: il ne s'agit plus d'essences mais de faits. Or, sur le plan des faits, les deux tendances prolongent un même pressentiment qui pousse confusément au premier plan de la psychologie les sensations internes". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, p. 108.

¹⁰Copleston writes: "True, Cabanis was the author of some pretty crude materialist statements, such as his famous assertion that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile. But he saw that Condillac's picture of the statue gradually endowed with one sense-organ after another represented an extremely inadequate and one-sided theory of the genesis of mental life. For Cabanis the nervous system, interior or organic sensations, the inherited physiological constitution and other factors belonging to the statue itself were of great importance. Cabanis was indeed a reductionist in the sense that he tried to find physiological bases for all men's mental operations". F. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9 Part I, The Revolution to Henri Bergson, p. 43.

¹¹Copleston states that the operation of judging in de Tracy is the "foundation of grammar and logic", while "reflection on the effects of the will grounds ethics". Ibid., p. 39.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁴George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de Grâce, p. 75.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 78.

24 "Avec Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy se réjouit de voir réunis dans la même classe de l'Institut analystes et physiologistes, symbole de ce que doit être la véritable science de l'homme. Au fond de son cœur, il se réjouit surtout d'y rencontrer Cabanis lui-même. Une affection touchante lie les deux philosophes: ils savent que leurs œuvres sont complémentaires: l'idéologie physiologique et l'idéologie rationnelle seront fondées dans un esprit de fraternelle collaboration.... Maine de Biran se trouve ainsi en présence de deux philosophes mais d'une seule philosophie ou, si l'on préfère, d'une philosophie à deux têtes". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, pp. 143-44.

25 "La vie intérieure de Maine de Biran était faite de l'alternance de domination du corps et de maîtrise de soi, d'états où l'on sent le bonheur ou le malheur sourdre de dispositions organiques involontaires, en contraste avec les rares moments où nous disposons de nous-même. La doctrine de Maine de Biran est une sorte de généralisation de cette expérience d'une dualité, qu'il retrouve dans les phénomènes de conscience en apparence les plus simples. De la description du paysage intérieur où il suivait avec inquiétude ce défile d'états affectifs dont la direction lui échappe, il passe à l'analyse psychologique qui retrouve, si l'on peut parler ainsi, la différentielle de la vie de l'âme ou pour employer son expression même, le fait primitif ou l'activité s'unit à la passivité, première origine de toute conscience". Emile Brehier, Histoire de la Philosophie, pp. 551-52.

26 "En rappelant et imaginant (ce qu'il ne confond pas plus que sentir et percevoir), l'individu qui réfléchit et ne se perd jamais de vue a observé que les images sont liées ou groupées entre elles, dans leur reproduction volontaire ou spontanée, comme les objets le sont ou l'étaient au-dehors". Maine de Biran, Influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser, ed. P. Tisserand, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), p. 119. Gouhier makes this observation on this method of reflection: "Cette méthode réfléchie n'affranchit pas la psychologie de la physiologie: elle joue à l'intérieur d'une psycho-physiologie. Le fait qui est premier selon l'ordre de l'expérience ne l'est pas nécessairement selon l'ordre de l'existence. La conscience de soi se détache sur un fond d'impressions et de désirs, reflets psychiques mais non personnalisés de la vie organique. Il s'agit de ne pas confondre le point de vue de l'existence et celui que définit le sentiment de l'existence. Une méthode n'est jamais qu'une manière d'énoncer un fait: celle de Biran signifie que l'origine du moi et de la volonté ne saurait être trouvée là où il n'y a justement ni moi ni volonté; le fait primitif et ceux dont il est le principe sont homogènes: la physiologie ne peut donner le premier et l'introspection les

autres; à la réflexion qui pose ceux-ci d'atteindre celui-là". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, p. 181. See also George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 134.

²⁷Ibid. , p. 135.

²⁸"Le dédoublement intérieur, par lequel on prend connaissance de soi, est un acte dont l'importance est capitale. Du moins, est-il impliqué dans toutes les opérations de l'esprit; il est le caractère auquel on les reconnaît. Or, Condillac et ses disciples l'ont totalement négligé. Ceux-ci ont voulu bannir de la psychologie tout esprit métaphysique. Ils ont déclaré ne vouloir connaître que des faits, ce qui dans leur pensée, signifiait que l'observation, telle qu'elle est pratiquée dans les sciences physiques est seule valable. Les phénomènes les plus simple que l'expérience puisse faire voir leur semblèrent donc fournir le principe de toute explication rigoureuse. Ils crurent trouver des faits possédant un caractère d'indépendance et d'objectivité complètes, et ces faits leur parurent être les seuls qui fussent susceptibles d'être retenus". George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 135.

²⁹Ibid. , p. 137.

³⁰Ibid. , p. 138.

³¹"La force naît d'une réflexion sur le terme actif de l'effort; la substance, d'une réflexion sur le terme passif. La première gardera toujours quelque chose de son origine, même lorsque, détachée de la volonté, elle sera appliquée au monde matériel. La seconde ne se débarrassera jamais complètement des caractères qu'elle doit à son modèle corporel. La force est l'idéumère de 'la psychologie ou science de nous-même'; la substance, celle de 'la physique ou science de la nature': c'est pourquoi le biranisme s'oppose et à la philosophie de Leibniz qui construit la nature avec une notion copiée sur l'activité du moi, et à la philosophie de Descartes qui construit le moi avec une notion copiée sur la passivité du corps". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, p. 209.

³²"Science de l'esprit, la nouvelle science des principes est évidemment celle des principes qui se trouvent dans l'esprit. La psychologie mérite donc ce titre en tant qu'elle est recherche du fait primitif: par exemple, Descartes, en partant du Cogito, Condillac, en partant de la sensation, n'ont pas vu le vrai principe. Mais ce fait, puisqu'il est primitif, ne suppose rien et, en quelque manière, pose tout, même ces notions premières qui, par leur

nécessité, sont appelées principes de la connaissance. La psychologie du moi est, du même coup, celle des idées de causalité, d'identité, de substance qui sont des aspects du moi". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, p. 222. For German philosophy de Biran had to content himself with the mediocre expositions of Villers, Kinker, Degerando, and Ancillon. Otherwise de Biran might have changed some of methodology. Moreover, Le Roy mentions that de Biran came to the study of Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, and the post-Kantians quite late. Le Roy, L'expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 143.

²²George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 153.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Maine de Biran, Memoire sur la décomposition de la pensée, quoted in Ibid.

²⁶Ibid. , p. 174.

²⁷"Cette force hyperorganique, comme hypersensible, ne m'étant donnée que dans le sentiment intime et radical qui accompagne son exercice dans l'effort actuel que je crée et dans le mouvement phénoménal qui y est lié. Je ne saurais l'imaginer comme la localiser dans aucune partie de mon organisation matérielle, sans en dénaturer l'idée propre". Maine de Biran, Aperception immédiate, in l'Effort, pp. 137-38. "Le Mémoire sur la décomposition de la pensée annonce une idéologie plus rigoureusement scientifique que celle des Idéologues. Le dogme prépositiviste de l'ignorance des substances sera respecté avec toute l'attention d'un auteur qui, en réhabilitant la cause efficiente, ne veut pas donner l'impression de revenir en arrière. Or la tentation est menaçante au principe même de la nouvelle psychologie: si le fait primitif est un moi qui trouve l'existence avec la conscience dans l'effort, comment une activité continue peut-elle naître d'actes discontinus? comment sortir de l'actuel sans quitter l'expérience? Maine de Biran doit expliquer d'abord l'identité personnelle sans faire appel à une identité substantielle; puis, allant plus profondément encore que le sentiment d'être le même, il est obligé de constater que l'esprit affirme un au-delà des données immédiates quand il pense l'effort senti dans son origine....L'âme-substance est 'abstraite du sentiment du moi'; l'âme comme force virtuelle, également: mais la première, coupée de tout rapport, est une chose, tandis que la seconde demeure à l'intérieur d'un rapport inachevé, force en attente d'acte, cause en attente d'effet. Qui dit chose dit objet et par suite risque d'une objectivation

matérialiste ou d'une objectivation ontologique: même virtuelle, la force reste une force et, si elle est indéterminée, c'est en tant que force et non en tant que notion ouverte à toutes les possibilités, y compris celle de n'être pas une force. Cette cause non sentie est conçue sur le modèle de la cause sentie, mais 'hyperorganique' ne désigne pas une nature: c'est un terme aussi scientifique que celui d'organique et destine précisément à éviter le terme métaphysique de 'spirituel'. Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, pp. 232-33.

³⁰George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 178.

³¹Maine de Biran frequently opposes his conception of effort against the occasionalism of Malebranche derived in part from Descartes. See Victor Delbos, "Malebranche et Maine de Biran, Revue de la Métaphysique et de Morale, 1916, pp. 147-62. Maine de Biran argues that Malebranche and Hume were wrong in placing everything on knowledge rather than action, thus, separating mind and body. George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 193.

³²Ibid. , p. 198.

³³Ibid. , p. 279.

³⁴Ibid. , p. 290. "Descartes et son école ont tourné autour de la distinction du moi, mais ils ne sont pas parvenus à se placer dans le point de vue de la conscience: c'est que la chose est fort difficile". Maine de Biran, Journal, ed. Henri Gouhier, tome I, Editions de la Baconnière, 3 Vol., 1954-57, p. 251. in L'Effort, p. 121.

³⁵"Quel autre génie que celui de Descartes, père de toute notre métaphysique moderne, pouvait concevoir le fondement réel de toute la science humaine sur le fait primitif de conscience ou de l'existence du moi pensant, comme sur sa base unique, la seule vraie et solide; quel autre pouvait reconnaître le caractère de l'évidence, ce critérium de toute certitude dans un petit nombre d'idées premières, élémentaires et simples données à l'âme humaine comme une lumière que l'éclaire d'abord sur elle-même, avant de lui révéler les autres existences"? Maine de Biran, Considérations sur les principes d'une division des faits psychologiques et physiologiques, ed. P. Tisserand, Œuvres de M. de Biran, t. XIII, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), p. 155 in L'Effort, p. 113.

³⁶Maine de Biran, Rapports des sciences naturelles avec la psychologie, p. 192, quoted in Le Roy, p. 294.

45 "Nous n'apercevons donc pas l'être substantiel, mais nous croyons qu'il est; et nous le croyons immédiatement et nécessairement sans aucun acte de raisonnement. Le donc je suis qui conclut de la pensée actuelle l'être absolu de la chose pensante, est une pure illusion logique. L'existence de moi actuel et la croyance à l'être pensant peuvent être deux faits collatéraux, ou deux éléments indivisibles du même fait de conscience, mais certainement le second n'est pas déduit du premier et il n'est point de passage de l'un à l'autre. Toute opération, tout effort de l'esprit tendant à prouver une première réalité absolue par l'intermédiaire d'idées ou de conceptions qui ne renferment pas essentiellement cette réalité est une tentative vaine et illusoire. C'est là ce qui a fait les sceptiques de tous les siècles. Ce que nous croyons nécessairement, nous ne le savons pas". Maine de Biran, Nouveaux essais d'anthropologie, Œuvres de M. de Biran, ed. P. Tisserand t. XIV. p. 293.

46 "S'agit-il de ce que l'âme est absolument comme chose, ou plutôt de ce qu'est l'homme comme être en soi? Il n'y a pas de lumière directe ni réfléchie qui puisse le lui apprendre. En supposant la pensée la plus profonde, la réflexion la plus concentrée sur les modes intimes, répétés et variés de toute manière dont se composerait une vie intellectuelle indéfiniment prolongée, cette pensée ne serait jamais le fond de la substance de l'âme. Elle ne saurait la révéler à elle-même, comme Dieu la connaît, tout entière. Les progrès les plus élevés de la connaissance du moi seraient toujours à la connaissance de l'âme substantielle dans le rapport incommensurable, ou infini, de l'asymptote à la courbe". Maine de Biran, Nouveaux essais d'anthropologie, p. 271 in L'Effort, p. 123. "Toute la force du principe de Descartes repose sur le point de vue psychologique si nettement exposé dans le passage de saint Augustin qui vient d'être cité. Je pense, donc j'existe; je suis infailliblement certain de l'existence de moi qui pense, par cela seul que je pense ou que je me sens exister; et comme je ne puis douter de ma pensée actuelle, puisque douter même serait une pensée, je ne puis douter non plus l'existence du sujet qui doute". Ibid. , pp. 127-28.

47 "En effet, l'homme n'est pour lui-même ni une âme, à part le corps vivant, ni un certain vivant, à part l'âme qui s'y unit sans s'y confondre. L'homme est le produit des deux, et le sentiment qu'il a de son existence n'est autre que celui de l'union ineffable des deux termes qui la constituent; en croyant se saisir lui-même sans l'un de ces deux éléments, l'esprit de l'homme ne peut embrasser qu'une illusion, un pure abstrait, une ombre, sans consistance ni réalité.... Nous l'avons déjà dit; en partant du fait de sens intime pour ramener le principe de Descartes de l'abstrait au

concret, du possible à l'actuel, du passif à l'actif, de la substance à la force, il pourrait être exprimé ainsi: Je veux, j'agis, donc j'existe. J'agis, Je commence le mouvement du corps, donc je suis non pas un pur abstrait, mais une personne; à ce titre, je coexiste, moi voulant, avec un corps sentant et mobile". Maine de Biran, Considérations sur les principes d'une division des faits psychologiques et physiologiques, in L'Effort, pp. 127-28.

⁴⁸George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'effort et de la grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 305.

⁴⁹Ibid. , p. 301. "D'abord, contre Descartes lui-même, que nous ne sommes ni plus ni moins assurées de l'existence réelle de notre corps, que de celle de notre âme; Que la réalité des deux substance qui constituent l'homme, et par suite les autres êtres immatériels et matériels, ressort du même principe, de la distinction immédiate du fait de la conscience ou de l'existence du moi". Maine de Biran, Nouveaux essais d'anthropologie, p. 299, in L'Effort, p. 134.

⁵⁰"L'être fictif, tel que nous l'avons supposé d'abord, ne peut s'apercevoir ou être constitué moi sans l'action qu'il exerce et la modification première qui en résulte, sans avoir l'idée ou le sentiment de son unicité. Tant que la même sensation suit ou accompagne immédiatement son effort, il est un dans le produit qu'il effectue comme dans la puissance ou la force. En disant d'abord moi il dit un; en répétant la même action suivie du même résultat, il dit encore un, ainsi de suite. Le temps est né pour lui, c'est comme disent les kantistes, la forme pure sous laquelle il s'aperçoit et se retrouve toujours le même. L'identité est donc encore inhérente à l'aperception personnelle ou au mode actif constant qui lui sert de base et avant tout (ce qu'on néglige d'observer les métaphysiciens qui ont marché sur les traces de Descartes, de Leibniz, de Kant) aux conditions d'où dépend la reproduction constante de ce mode. Lorsque, par les nouvelles circonstances où nous plaçons l'individu, les sensations varient et se succèdent, pendant que l'effort reste le même, il y a pluralité sentie ou perçue dans l'unité, il peut y avoir aussi une durée mesurée par l'intervalle des modifications accidentelles successives, parce qu'il y a un module fixe, un terme commun auquel tous les instants se rapportent. De telles idées ne sont point abstraites, pour l'être que nous avons supposé; ce sont, au contraire, les premiers et les plus simples résultats de ses facultés originelles, inséparables du sentiment qu'il a de son existence active". Maine de Biran, Décomposition de la pensée, t. II, p. 31, in L'Effort, p. 136.

⁵¹ On de Biran's use of reflection this is what is understood: "L'introspection est observation étrangère que l'égo opère sur lui-même, au cours d'un dédoublement où il se regarde agir, constate à distance ce qui se passe en lui; cette introspection mérite tout à fait la critique que lui adresse Comte. Mais la reflexion biranienne, loin d'instaurer une distance au sein du moi, en est la négation même. Biran, dans le Mémoire sur la décomposition de la pensée, distingue expressément la reflexion en tant qu'imaginée sur le modèle du phénomène physique ainsi nommée et la reflexion qui est savoir immédiat de ses propres actes.... Dans reflexion, le préfixe re ne désigne pas l'entrebaillement d'un écart, mais un mouvement de retour, non un retour sur soi, mais un retour à soi.... Si la reflexion n'est pas mouvement de redoublement sur soi, qu'est-elle positivement? Selon M. Henry, elle désigne cette connaissance qui est incluse dans toute intentionalité et qui n'est pas la connaissance de ce qui est visé par cette intentionalité.... La question se pose enfin de savoir s'il existe un troisième sens du terme reflexion. En effet, lorsque Biran analyse les rapports de l'ouïe et de la voix, il y souligne un exemple remarquable de la présence à soi dans la mesure où l'ouïe du sujet reflèchit directement son acte de parler. Il y a là comme un révélateur du moi à lui-même car l'intentionnalité du locuteur est en quelque sorte aussitôt renvoyée à lui-même.... Mais l'analyse biranienne ici incriminée n'est-elle pas qu'un cas particulier de la dualité primitive de l'effort? Dans l'effort, l'égo s'instaure précisément comme tel parce que la force qui le constitue s'articule directement sur une résistance, c'est faire comprendre à la fois comment cette force existe et s'aperçoit; l'égo n'est pas l'un des deux termes, mais la dualité, car aucune scission n'intervient entre force et résistance. Force et résistance sont les deux côtés d'un même acte". Gilbert Romeyer-Dherbey, Maine de Biran ou le penseur de l'immanence radicale, (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1974), pp. 202-203. Cf. "Les notions reflexives ne sont pas des abstractions comme les autres, telle est l'opinion à laquelle la critique de l'empirisme conduit Maine de Biran. Dira-t-on qu'elles sont a priori? Il convient, remarque M. Henry, de faire subir une réduction phénoménologique à ce terme, car l'a priori biranien, à la différence de celui de Kant, n'est ni posé, ni réalisé en dehors de toute observation; il appartient à la sphère de l'immanence". René Lacroze, Maine de Biran, p. 131.

⁵² George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 325.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 327.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 328.

⁵⁵Ibid. , p. 329.

⁵⁶Maine de Biran, Journal Intime. 25 Sept, 1814
éd. T. I, p. 87. quoted in Le Roy, p. 330.

⁵⁷At this time Maine de Biran is reading Marcus Aurelius. See Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, pp. 3367.

⁵⁸Maine de Biran, Journal Intime. 10 avril, 1823
éd. t. I , p. 305. quoted in Le Roy, p. 325.

⁵⁹Ibid. , p. 339.

⁶⁰Reardon makes this comment on de Biran's conversion to mysticism: "In the end Biran was to arrive at an overt mystical philosophy according to which the soul, finally absorbed in contemplation of the divine, loses even the sense of selfhood and freedom and becomes as it were de-personalized. Probably the now rapidly failing health had not a little to do with his longing for deliverance from the burden of existence, but its roots really lie deeper. The moral attitudes of Stoicism which at one time he had so much admired, his own experience had taught him to recognize as futile; man's passions and sufferings were too great". Bernard Reardon, Liberalism and Tradition, p. 146.

⁶¹Gouhier offers us these observations: "Après avoir élaboré une psychologie à partir d'un fait exprimant l'union de l'âme et du corps, Maine de Biran est amené à en construire une autre où trouverait place l'expérience de leur separation. Un vocabulaire kantien, des souvenirs de Rousseau, des schèmes platoniciens se mêlent dans sa pensée; tout naturellement les derniers s'imposent. Or, déjà dans les dialogues, ils unissaient deux thèmes, celui de l'illumination et celui de l'inspiration: les retrouvant en climat chrétien, Maine de Biran identifie spontanément l'inspiration à la grâce. Le caractère moral de l'expérience éprouvée favorise, d'ailleurs, toute définition faisant de l'illumination une grâce: l'évasion ressemblera à un rapt, le logos aura l'amour pour auréole, le soleil des esprits sera la chaleur qui vivifie. La transposition théologique s'opère au profit de la troisième personne et non de la seconde: le platonisme ne conduit pas Maine de Biran à une philosophie du Verbe mais à une philosophie du Saint-Esprit". Henri Gouhier, Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, p. 360.

⁶²George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 381. Maine de Biran always remains in the realm of psychology and never wanders into the theological arena. Comments by Gouhier are sufficient to bring this out: "Ce qui intéresse Maine de Biran dans les

écrits chrétiens, c'est une phénoménologie plutôt qu'une théologie; il parle de la grâce comme il parlait de l'effort.... ce nouveau fait primitif n'est pas une expérience spécifiquement chrétienne: il introduit dans le biranisme le thème platonicien de la séparation de l'âme et du corps qui, seule, permet à l'âme de vivre selon sa nature propre. Car, si il est dans la nature de l'âme de vivre unie aux réalités spirituelles.... Maine de Biran restaure l'idée d'une grâce pour délivrer l'âme emprisonnée dans son corps et non pour racheter le fils d'Adam. Sa psychologie est celle d'un être qui, à aucun moment, ne sera considéré comme pécheur. Ceci est normal: la chute originelle n'est pas une notion psychologique et même, dans sa perspective, on chercherait vainement les traces psychologiques qui pourraient au moins l'introduire dans l'anthropologie sous forme de postulat commode. Biran ne définit donc pas le don divin par rapport à une haute morale dont les conséquences psychophysiologiques se transmettent de générations en générations: le secours venu d'en haut s'applique à une misère naturelle. Si loin que le philosophe soit désormais de Rousseau, il ignore la tragédie chrétienne autant que le Vicaire savoyard". Henri Gouhier. Les Conversions de Maine de Biran, p. 387.

"Le psychologue constate la présence de l'Esprit dans l'âme disposée à le recevoir: il peut aussi remarquer que l'esprit souffle où il veut: aucun signe ne lui permet de soupçonner dans la distribution de la grâce un ordre de fins commande par un intérêt exclusivement divin". Ibid., p. 392.

George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 363.

"J'ai été autrefois bien embarrassé pour concevoir comment l'esprit de vérité pouvait être en nous sans être nous-mêmes ou sans s'identifier avec notre propre esprit, notre moi". Maine de Biran, Journal. 20 décembre, 1823 t. II, p. 419, in L'Effort, p. 169.

"J'entends maintenant la communication intérieure d'un esprit supérieur à nous qui nous parle, que nous entendons au-dedans, qui vivifie et féconde notre esprit sans se confondre avec lui, car nous sentons que les bonnes pensées, les bons mouvements ne sortent pas de nous-mêmes. Cette communication intime de l'esprit avec le notre propre quand nous savons l'appeler ou lui préparer une demeure au-dedans, est un véritable fait psychologique et non pas de foi seulement". Ibid.

George Le Roy, L'Expérience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 366.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid. , p. 367.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid. , p. 369.

⁷²"A mesure, dis-je, qu'il s'éloigne des sensations ou du monde phénoménique qu'elles composent, il peut atteindre un monde supérieur de réalités invisibles, qui ne se manifeste qu'à un sens sublime, à celui de la religion ou de la foi et de l'amour". Maine de Biran, Nouveaux essais d'anthropologie, 221. For de Biran only Christianity is able to provide an explanation for the supernatural need: "Le christianisme seul explique ce mystère; seul il révèle à l'homme une troisième vie, supérieure à celle de la sensibilité et à celle de la raison ou de la volonté humaine. Aucun autre système de philosophie ne s'est élevé jusque-là. la philosophie stoïque de Marc-Aurèle, tout élevé qu'elle est, ne sort pas des limites de la deuxième vie, et montre seulement avec exagération le pouvoir de la volonté, ou encore de la raison (qui forme à l'âme comme une atmosphère lumineuse dont la source est hors de l'âme) sur les affections et les passions de la vie sensitive. Mais il y a quelque chose de plus, c'est l'absorption de la raison et de la volonté dans une force suprême, absorption qui constitue sans effort, un état de perfection et de bonheur". Ibid. , p. 373.

"In de Biran's view there are three natures in the human life: the animal life, the life proper to man, and the spiritual life. In de Biran's words: "Il n'y a pas seulement deux principes opposés dans l'homme: il y en a trois.... Quand tout serait d'accord et en harmonie entre les facultés sensitives et actives qui constituent l'homme, il y aurait encore une nature supérieure, une 3^e vie qui ne serait pas satisfaite, et ferait sentir qu'il y a un autre bonheur, une autre sagesse, une autre perfection, au-delà du plus grand bonheur humain, de la plus haute sagesse ou perfection intellectuelle et morale dont l'être humain soit susceptible". Maine de Biran, Journal, septembre 1823, t. III, p. 192 in L'Effort, p. 167.

"George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 373.

"Ibid., p. 375.

"Ibid.

"The difference between de Biran and Pascal is suggested in this manner by Lacroze: "Maine de Biran a le souci constant de se distinguer de Pascal qu'il admire, mais auquel il ne cesse de s'opposer. Toutes les fois qu'il est possible, il prolonge ses Pensées dans un sens qui n'est pas celui du jansénisme. Or, si Biran critique Pascal, c'est parce qu'à son avis la grâce n'est pas le principe qui arrache l'homme à sa misère; pour comprendre son mode d'action, il faut distinguer en ce dernier le sensible et l'intellectuel: une théorie de la grâce doit être fondée sur une saine psychologie. L'erreur de Pascal est de se placer en dehors de la nature humaine et c'est celle que Maine de Biran tente de corriger chez l'auteur des Pensées". René Lacroze, Maine de Biran, p. 191.

"Le Roy points out that if de Biran's thought departs from that of Christianity, it is nonetheless true to its method in remaining within the lines it has traced. L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 383.

"On the access to the spiritual life Le Roy points out that "Maine de Biran conçoit un prélude à une participation plus haute. Il reconnaît qu'en l'homme de nombreuses résistances retardent l'avènement de la grâce, et que par conséquent la première tâche qui s'impose est de supprimer ces résistances. Mais il ajoute aussitôt que les obstacles dont il s'agit sont en fait de simples déficiences organiques et non pas une perversion foncière de la volonté. D'après lui, le corps ne constitue pas un ennemi qu'il faille détruire, mais il apporte une gêne qu'il doit être possible

de dominer". George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce, p. 386.

⁴⁰Ibid. , pp. 389-91.

⁴¹As de Biran writes: "L'esprit souffle ou il veut: quelque fois il se retire". Maine de Biran, Nouveaux essais d'anthropologie, p. 376.

⁴²"Bref, dans la personne de Jesus, l'homme et le Dieu se trouvent si etroitement et si profondement unis, que sans jamais disparaître la nature participe tout entiere a la grâce et s'en voit penetree.... Avec le Christ le regne de la grâce est accompli, parce que la participation totale, qui définit la vie spirituelle, est assurée". George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 399.

⁴³Le Roy writes that "l'être humain est envahi par la grace et gouverne par elle, et que, par consequent, le rôle qui lui revient est seulement d'être docile et soumis, sans volonte propre que celle même de Dieu. Maine de Biran explique que par la vie spirituelle nous sommes transportes en Dieu, notre moi s'aneantissant pour ainsi dire en lui et n'existant des lors que par lui". George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, pp. 400-401.

⁴⁴Victor Cousin, in his preface to the editions of the works of Maine de Biran which he edited, expressed his objection that de Biran underestimated the importance of rational facts and that de Biran had taken refuge in mysticism. Le Roy states this commentary: "Victor Cousin a voulu se degager du mysticisme; mais, ce faisant, il a montre que, sous ce nom, il ne considerait qu'un sentiment passif, comparable a celui que procurent les affections organiques". George Le Roy, L'Experience de l'Effort et de la Grâce chez Maine de Biran, p. 403.

⁴⁵"En insistant sur la passivite de ces etats, Maine de Biran ne fait que rejoindre la tradition chretienne". Ibid. , p. 406.

⁴⁶Yet de Biran thoughts on mysticism is basically original: "N'oublions pas qu'en ces matieres Maine de Biran s'appuie presque exclusivement sur son experience personnelle. Il ne paraît connaître aucun des grands maitres de la vie spirituelle: ni Sainte Thérèse, ni Saint-Jean de la Croix, ni Saint-François de Sales. Les seules études doctrinales qu'il ait lues sur ces questions, sont celles de Fénelon, dont l'Explication des Maximes des Saints et les Lettres spirituelles lui ont fourni le plus clair des

connaissances objectives qu'il possède. C'est, en définitive, à son expérience propre de la vie religieuse qu'il doit, sur ce point, la plupart de ses idées". Ibid.

⁸⁷Giuseppe Gioia, "Introduzione a Nabert e Bibliografia", Giornale di Metafisica, (Nuova Serie), IV, 1982, pp. 347-386. See also Wesley Piersol, "Introductory Notes on Jean Nabert, Philosophy Today, Vol. XI, No. 3/4, 1967, pp. 208-212.

⁸⁸Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature, pp. 191-92; p. 425; p. 468. Robberechts makes this remark: "Les larges et très réelles perspectives que Blondel nous révèle dans le mouvement profond de la volonté humaine, Jean Nabert les découvre à son tour, mais dans un contexte fort différent: la pondération et la rigueur méticuleuse du philosophe kantien remplacent l'envolée quasi mystique du philosophe chrétien". Ludovic Robberechts, "Quelques théories de la liberté: Autour de Jean Nabert", Revue Philosophique de Louvain, 62, 1964, p. 245.

⁸⁹Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature, p. 31.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Concerning Blondel's understanding of action Ricoeur has this to say: "The concept of action, so broad and so precise, seems to us to acquire its full significance on the level of a Poetics or, better yet, of a spiritual analysis of the will, such as we find in Pascal, Dostoevski, Bergson, or Marcel. On this level there prevail essentially unifying concepts, beyond the diversity of acts and in particular beyond the duality of knowledge and of acting whose divergence in aim and object we have had to respect. Action is one such unitive concept". Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature, p. 31.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Jean Nabert, "La Philosophie réflexive, Encyclopédie française, t. XIX, 1957, 19-04-15.

⁹⁶Ibid. Of this reflective method, Naulin states this: "Ainsi, quand la philosophie de l'être fait appel à l'analyse réflexive, ce n'est pas pour permettre à la conscience de se retrouver elle-même au fondement de l'expérience, mais pour lui révéler la présence en elle-même d'un absolu dont la conscience tient tout son être et en

particulier le pouvoir de réfléchir. Il est donc exclu que l'analyse réflexive suffise à constituer la méthode de la philosophie. Elle n'est que la condition d'un retour à l'être à partir duquel s'opère un changement radical de perspective qui substitue la synthèse progressive à l'analyse régressive". Paul Naulin, L'Itinéraire de la conscience: Etude de la philosophie de Jean Nabert, (Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1963), p. 67.

"Nabert writes, "La regression analytique décrit les étapes qu'il faut parcourir et les illusions qui doivent être dissipées pour que s'effectue ce progrès vers la conscience de soi qui est, identiquement, conscience que l'Etre prend de soi dans un être fini. La réflexion découvre, plus qu'elle ne crée. Et, d'entrée de jeu, si l'on ose dire, ce qui est accordé, c'est la présence de l'Etre ou de l'absolu au sein du relatif et des êtres particuliers". Jean Nabert, "Philosophie réflexive". 19-04-15.

"Ibid. "A la distinction du phénomène et de l'être, se substitue en effet celle de l'événement et de l'acte. Au sens strict, on entend par événement tout phénomène considéré en tant qu'il affecte le moi à un moment déterminé du temps et d'une manière qui peut sembler d'abord purement contingente. Mais la réflexion va l'interpréter selon les deux orientations fondamentales que nous avons déjà définies: d'une part, elle met l'événement en relation nécessaire avec d'autres événements pour constituer par exemple une biographie, donc une étude psychologique de la personnalité; d'autre part, à cette nécessité qui relève de la connaissance objective, s'oppose une nécessité d'un autre ordre qui transparait dans l'événement, la nécessité des normes qui régissent les opérations de la conscience individuelle et que les philosophes de la réflexion rapportent à l'activité de la conscience pure. Tout événement se double donc d'un acte en fonde la signification: un raisonnement, par exemple, peut être considéré, soit comme un événement, c'est-à-dire un fait psychologique qu'on expliquera en le reliant à d'autres faits psychologiques et sans tenir compte de sa valeur, soit comme l'expression d'une activité rationnelle qui en constitue la vérité". Paul Naulin, L'Itinéraire de la conscience, p. 68.

"Jean Nabert, "La philosophie réflexive". 19-04-15.

"These are the starting points of the various philosophers that Nabert classifies under the heading of philosophers of reflection: Maine de Biran (1766-1824), Lachelier (1832-1918), Lagneau (1851-1894), Brunschvicg (1870-1944).

101 "... lorsque nous parlons d'un contenu de la conscience, nous objectivons déjà une tension, une relation de soi à soi qui est l'être même de la conscience et promesse de liberté". Jean Nabert, "La Philosophie réflexive", 19-04-15. Naulin makes some noteworthy comments: "La réflexion philosophique ne s'applique donc pas à la conscience, elle doit la retrouver à partir de l'objet, en inversant le mouvement spontané qui, sans cesse et dans tous les domaines, nous fait oublier au profit du signe l'acte qui en fonde la signification. Ce qu'elle vise à partir du monde, c'est une certitude qui sans doute ne peut s'affirmer qu'en lui et par lui, mais sans jamais pouvoir s'y égaler à elle-même parce qu'elle n'est pas de l'ordre du monde. En ce sens, le propre de la méthode réflexive est de fonder l'analyse sur une philosophie de la conscience pure qui, pour Nabert, a trouvé son expression la plus exacte dans la doctrine fichteenne du jugement théorique. La méthode ne peut en effet atteindre son but que si l'analyse s'achève par la position, sous la forme du Je suis, d'une conscience capable d'opérer la synthèse constitutive des expériences qui affectent la conscience concrète". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, p. 70.

102 Jean Nabert, "Philosophie réflexive". 19-04-16.

103 Ibid.

104 The French tradition starts with Maine de Biran's uncartesian starting point: 'I will, therefore I am', where the intimacy of mind and body is secured.

105 This refers to Kant.

106 Paul Ricoeur, preface to Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. XX.

107 Ibid. . p. XXI

108 Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 117. Nabert goes on to say that "the moral imperatives were indifferent to our desire to be, if they did not correspond in the history of this desire to the moment in which it is a condition of its unfolding that it submit to a law, only with difficulty would one avoid juxtaposing a duty to, or imposing a duty on, a nature which refused it. Even more, if, finally, these moral imperatives did not favor an expansion of this desire, the self would believe that it had discovered a kind of contradiction between duty and an aspiration which one would never persuade it to confuse with a tendency which it might forgo as belonging to a nature deprived of value. This aspiration has nothing in common with the desire for

satisfaction related to this or that determined tendency. Nor is it like a synthesis of all tendencies. Whatever help this aspiration might ask of the tendencies, it is not for a goal which would be identical with the goal of any one of them. All tendencies serve this aspiration or are capable of serving it, and no one of them is indispensable to it. They can be lacking to this aspiration even though the satisfaction of which it is capable is not diminished". Ibid., pp. 117-18.

¹⁰⁹Paul Ricoeur, preface to Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. XVII.

¹¹⁰Ibid. As Naulin reminds us, "La réflexion n'est pas tournée vers le passé, mais, à travers lui, vers l'avenir". Paul Naulin, L'Itinéraire de la conscience, p. 71. André Jacob writes that "une philosophie de la réflexion est finalement une philosophie du temps, du fait même que le temps humain ne se constitue et ne s'appréhende qu'en se réfléchissant, notamment en récupérant son passé". André Jacob, "Les Implications Temporelles de l'Éthique", Les Etudes Philosophiques, no. 3, 1962, p. 384.

¹¹¹Paul Ricoeur, preface to Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. XVII.

¹¹²Naulin writes that "l'éthique procède tout entière d'une réflexion philosophique sur l'expérience morale. Or, celle-ci est faite de certains sentiments: sentiments de la faute, de l'échec, de la solitude, sentiments où s'exprime la relation de la subjectivité à la conscience pure, sentiment de l'injustifiable, etc. Mais ces sentiments ne constituent une expérience qu'autant qu'ils sont à la fois l'occasion et la matière d'une réflexion qui conditionne le progrès de l'existence". Paul Naulin, L'Itinéraire de la conscience, p. 76.

¹¹³Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 3.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 4. "... le progrès de l'existence que nous en attendons est-il inséparable de la méthode réflexive, c'est-à-dire de la réflexion proprement philosophique? Ce serait dire seul, le philosophe peut parvenir à la possession de soi, à la sagesse, parce que le redressement de l'existence a pour condition nécessaire et suffisante la connaissance de la vérité ... On sait déjà que Nabert répugne à cet aristocratism intellectuel et que son souci majeur est de justifier l'autonomie de l'action par rapport à la

connaissance. Des lors, toute la difficulté est de comprendre que la philosophie ait une valeur pratique sans en posséder cependant le privilège. A cette difficulté, il n'est d'autre solution que de concevoir la réflexion philosophique comme une reprise de la réflexion que tout homme exerce naturellement. De l'une à l'autre, il y aurait sans doute différence et progrès, mais non pas rupture. Sans doute, nous ne devenons philosophes que par la libre décision de refuser les préjugés de la conscience commune". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, p. 71.

¹¹²Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 4.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid. , p. 5.

¹¹⁵Ibid. , p. 6.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid. , p. 7. "La méthode réflexive exclut en tout cas une description qui nous ramènerait au psychologisme existentialiste. Comme nous venons de l'indiquer, son rôle est d'abord critique: en retrouvant l'acte derrière les signes dans lesquels il s'incarne, elle permet de rectifier les interprétations spontanées qu'en donne la réflexion naturelle, d'éliminer les formes de culture qui le masquent plus qu'elles ne le révèlent". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, p. 78.

¹¹⁸Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 7. "Because, as Naulin points out, "l'éthique ne peut donc que reprendre une recherche immanente à la vie morale elle-même". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, p. 77.

¹¹⁹Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 9.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid. , p. 10. "Des lors, si l'on considère la réflexion philosophique, non dans l'intention qui la définit, mais, au même titre que toute réflexion, comme un événement ou transparait la libre initiative d'un sujet, on ne saurait la tenir pour purement speculative. Elle n'est pas seulement théorie de l'action, mais action et constitue donc à son tour le principe d'une expérience, de l'expérience que constitue pour tout philosophe la recherche de la vérité. D'une part, en effet, cette recherche affecte et transforme son existence, d'autre part, elle ne cesse de prendre appui, pour se vérifier, sur cette transformation même. Car, dans la mesure où Nabert rejette, avec l'idée d'une intuition

intellectuelle, toute possibilité de déduire a priori la conscience de soi, il est exclu que la réflexion philosophique puisse coïncider avec son propre principe et éliminer la facticité en substituant la synthèse à l'analyse. A l'intérieur même de la réflexion philosophique, subsiste donc un donné qui atteste son appartenance à la conscience réelle et l'impossibilité pour celle-ci de s'élever à la conscience pure. C'est en ce sens qu'il faut comprendre que chaque philosophie est faite d'une sorte de tension entre l'approfondissement de soi et l'idée d'une communication de cette pensée reconquérant l'universel. Cette tension prouve en effet que, s'il n'y a pas d'irréflexi qui soit pur de toute réflexion, il n'y a pas non plus de réflexion qui puisse éliminer totalement l'irréflexi". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, pp. 79-80.

1- Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 10.

2- Ibid., p. 13.

3- Ibid., p. 11.

4- Ibid., pp. 14-15. Jacob writes that "la réflexion épouse le mouvement du temps. Prise de conscience du passé (réflexion), elle n'acquiert son sens qu'en le dépassant, c'est-à-dire en tirant d'un présent purifié et plus fondamental le pouvoir de s'élancer vers l'avenir". André Jacob, "Les Implications Temporelles de l'Ethique", Les Etudes Philosophiques, p. 400. Naulin comments: "Il semble d'abord que l'idée de ma responsabilité, telle que l'exige la vie morale, m'interdise de comprendre le sentiment que j'éprouve. Sans doute, mon histoire est irréversible et nul ne peut faire que mon acte n'ait pas eu lieu. Du moins, je ne puis le condamner qu'autant que je l'attribue à ma liberté. Or, le propre de celle-ci n'est-il pas de se retrouver tout entière, après chacune de ses déviations? Sans éluder le moins du monde ma responsabilité, ne puis-je croire que je suis actuellement aussi libre que je l'étais avant de commettre cette faute? A ce niveau de la réflexion correspond en effet une conception rationaliste de la vie morale, fondée sur l'autonomie d'une conscience dont la causalité n'est jamais compromise par les actes qu'elle produit". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, p. 257.

5- Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 16.

6- Ibid., p. 18. Naulin offers this comment: "Il importe cependant de ne pas les confondre si on veut saisir la portée d'une réflexion sur l'échec. Or, celui-ci se distingue de la faute, à la fois par son domaine et par son sens. Par son domaine tout d'abord, qui débord de beaucoup celui de la vie morale: sans doute, l'échec, comme la faute,

concerne l'action. Mais il peut affecter celle-ci dans son rapport à tous les ordres de valeurs: il y a un échec de la création artistique, de l'invention intellectuelle, de la tactique politique, aussi bien que de la moralité. Par son sens ensuite, car si l'échec s'accompagne parfois de la transgression d'une règle, il ne lui est pas nécessairement lié: il ne repose pas en effet sur une disposition intérieure du vouloir, sur l'adoption par la conscience d'une fin qu'elle devrait reprouver. Il peut donc bien susciter le sentiment de la faute, mais, en lui-même, il ne se laisse pas qualifier par l'idée du mal moral". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, pp. 277-78.

¹³⁹Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 20.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 21. Nabert points out that "just like the experience of fault, the experience of failure stands out against the background of a fundamental experience which it specifies and determines and which accompanies all intuition of existence, even the fullest". Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 26. "... just like the experience of fault, the experience of failure could not be what it is if it was not entirely compensated for, and commanded by a certitude without common measure with the conditions in which for us the promotion of existence takes place. The effort against failure draws its raison d'être from an affirmation which is beyond success and failure". Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 41. Naulin asserts that "il n'y a de vie morale concrète que dans l'intersubjectivité". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, p. 291.

¹⁴⁸Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 41.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 42. Jean Baufay makes this noteworthy comment: "Les expériences de la faute, de l'échec et de la solitude font éclater le cadre de la vie strictement morale, qui se présente comme la spécification d'une expérience métaphysique plus large". Jacques Baufay, La Philosophie

Religieuse de Jean Nabert, (Namur: Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1974), p. 46.

¹⁴²Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 43.

¹⁴³Ibid. Cf. "L'éthique devra donc en particulier récuser toutes les doctrines qui voudraient trouver dans l'incarnation l'origine d'une déchéance de la conscience et d'une aliénation de sa liberté. Car l'union de l'âme et du corps ne fait qu'exprimer l'acte originaire d'une conscience qui ne peut affirmer son existence qu'en produisant une subjectivité dans son triple rapport à soi, au monde et aux autres. C'est cet acte qui, tout à la fois, l'éveille à sa destinée morale et rend possible sa relation avec la nature à l'intérieur de laquelle va s'accomplir cette destinée". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, pp. 314-15.

¹⁴⁴Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 45.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 49. "Ma certitude n'est fondée que si la réflexion intéresse mon être même et lui apporte un commencement de régénération. Il faut donc supposer que cette réflexion coïncide avec une affirmation qui est, le principe de mon être. Ainsi, l'acte par lequel je prends conscience de ce que je suis n'est possible qu'autant qu'il produit un être qui n'est déjà plus celui que je suis: la réflexion contient en soi une genèse. Dès lors, le 'je suis' se dédouble: l'affirmation de mon être réel en rapport avec une situation donne recouvre une affirmation plus profonde et inconditionnée, affirmation en ce sens originaire et absolue. La certitude morale est donc fondée sur la structure du jugement thétique: il y a dans le 'je suis' infiniment plus que le 'je suis', car l'acte de l'affirmation transcende le contenu de cette affirmation. Le principe de la conscience de soi n'est pas un être, mais un acte, l'affirmation inconditionnée qui conditionne toute réflexion". Paul Naulin, L'itinéraire de la conscience, pp. 325-26.

¹⁴⁶Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 49. Cf. "For Nabert the Cogito does not have, in and of itself, a proper meaning. The first truth or primitive évidence presented by the Cogito is as abstract and empty as it is invincible. Since there is no intuition of the self by the self, no immediate consciousness, the Cogito, to become meaningful, must be mediated, that is, placed in relation to experience, to the works, signs, productions of consciousness. Said in another way, Nabert maintains that in order to decipher the meaning of the Cogito it is necessary to go back reflexively to the originary and constitutive act of the experience that inaugurated reflection. The meaning of the Cogito is therefore a function of the originary and

constitutive act". Vance Mendenhall, "Reinterpreting First Evidence: Around the Cogito with Jean Nabert", Philosophy Today, 1976, p. 337.

¹⁵⁰Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 51.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵³Ibid. "Ainsi, la réflexion qui tend à ressaisir le principe de la certitude se convertit nécessairement en action. Car, si la conscience doit d'abord se détourner du monde et renoncer à agir, pour s'assurer de la présence en elle de l'absolu, elle ne peut atteindre celui-ci sans s'apercevoir aussitôt qu'il ne pourrait la soutenir et la régénérer si elle ne se donnait pour tâche de se l'approprier en agissant". Paul Naulin, L'Itinéraire de la conscience, p. 331.

¹⁵⁴Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 57. "Le désir d'être, dans ces conditions, constitue le lien entre le moi réel, dans sa misère, et son principe, la transparence absolue dont il forme l'idée pour aussitôt apprécier, à sa lumière, son être concret. Le désir d'être est le témoin de l'effort par lequel le moi travaille indéfiniment à combler la différence qui le définit". Jacques Baufoy, La Philosophie Religieuse de Jean Nabert, p. 47.

¹⁵⁵Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 58.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 71. "A toute 'philosophie de l'intelligible', Jean Nabert oppose une 'philosophie de la valeur': celle-ci n'a pas pour but de dire la vérité, de parler en vérité de l'être ou de l'existence, mais se donner une signification de valeur à l'existence. Elle n'est pas faite de jugements de vérité, mais de jugements de valeur". Robert Franck, "Les traits fondamentaux de la méthode de Jean Nabert", Revue Philosophique de Louvain, 63, 1965, p. 97.

¹⁵⁷Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 71.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 77. "Les spécifications de l'intention pure en différents ordres (les ordres de valeurs) peuvent s'appeler elles-mêmes, pour marquer leur caractère dynamique, 'intentions pures': ce sont ces intentions pures ... qui soutiennent les prédicats de valeurs et en font, non pas des qualifications partielles de la réalité, mais des impératifs de réalisation. Pour que l'intention pure où se traduit la conscience pure puisse être source de valeurs, elle doit prendre des directions plus spéciales. Celes-ci, qui dessinent les ordres de valeurs et correspondent aux

différentes fonctions de la conscience, sont indiquées et préfigurées par les diverses modalités que prend le rapport de la conscience concrète et du monde". Jacques Baufay, La Philosophie Religieuse de Jean Nabert, pp. 56-57.

¹³⁹ Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 81.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 86.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid. , p. 90. Of this separated consciousness Levert makes this remark: "Ce n'est plus séparation à l'égard d'un objet extérieur, mais intérieure au moi, séparation à l'égard de soi, à l'égard du principe de l'être, et dont naît la conscience de soi". Paule Levert, Jean Nabert ou l'Exigence absolue, (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1971), p. 73.

¹⁰³Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 91. Cf. "Le contenu propre de l'éthique se situe cependant au-delà des possibilités d'existence que peut actualiser le moi dans la poursuite des fins de culture". Jacques Bautay, La Philosophie religieuse de Jean Nabert, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, pp. 93-4.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. , p. 94.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. Paule Levert writes that "la finalité d'une idée dont l'objet n'appartient pas à la nature, qu'elle réussisse ou non, réconcilie les diverses tendances sur ce plan nouveau de l'unité du vouloir". Paule Levert, Jean Nabert ou l'Exigence absolue, p. 73.

¹⁰⁸Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 95.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. , p. 100.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid. , p. 101.

¹¹³Nabert suggests that there "seems to be a moral substance or the person, independent of what he does, and without relationship, one might say, to the degree one might assign to the goals of the will in the hierarchy of ends". Ibid. , p. 102.

¹¹⁴Ibid. , p. 104.

¹¹⁵Ibid. , p. 102.

¹¹⁶Ibid. , p. 104. Levert makes this interesting comment: "Pour les philosophies telles que celles de Bergson ou de Teilhard de Chardin, l'univers entier est animé par une spontanéité naturelle orientée vers des fins qui se confondent avec la Valeur. Alors la liberté n'est plus que la conscience de ce mouvement de la nature. Au contraire, pour Nabert, les fins servent les valeurs dans la mesure où elles

expriment, dans une conscience solidaire de la nature, un rapport avec un princip qui n'est pas de la nature. De ces fins, qui ne sont pas donnees, naissent de nouvelles possibilites d'existence". Paul Levert, Jean Nabert ou l'Exigence de l'absolue, p. 74.

127 "... in a universe in which finality reigns everywhere, value is interior to this finality, to the goals in which it shares itself, goals which are just so many directions of its effort". Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 104.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid., p. 106.

131 Ibid., p. 107. "Et du fait que ce desir d'être n'est pas de l'ordre de la nature, ce n'est pas le simple prolongement des tendances naturelles qui pourrait le satisfaire, mais seulement des fins ou des activites qui, si elles empruntent aux tendances leur force, manifestent au moi des possibilites d'existence transcendant la nature: ce sont les fins de culture - depuis la travail jusqu'aux productions superieures de l'esprit". Jacques Hauay, La Philosophie Religieuse de Jean Nabert, p. 67.

132 Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 109.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., p. 110.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid., p. 111.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid., p. 112.

139 Ibid., p. 113.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid., p. 114.

142 "It seems, in fact, that duty has its place in a world in which minds are obliged first of all to obtain an initial success over nature by instituting an order which establishes a zone of protection around each person. Duty

asks all to try to modify the motivation of their acts in the same direction. All specifically moral values refer to this order of human relations and to this inner discipline of decisions. Because of this order, minds can address an appeal to one another which issues both from a desire for unity and from a desire for self-transparency which duty manages to awaken but which it cannot satisfy. The possibility of self-accomplishment is offered to the self, not beneath, but beyond duty, or literally, within duty but not exactly through duty. When the subject of the law does not differ from the subject who, depending on the law, gains possession of himself and can testify that he is, the guarantee which duty gives this experience increases its authority and intensifies its value but does not fundamentally constitute it. What is decisive in this experience is that there is no longer any margin for consciousness between what it does and what it is. Consciousness owes its possibility to be to the relationship which its desire sustains with a primary certitude of which the law is only a symbol. The order of duty contributes to revealing to the self a desire to be whose deepening is identified with ethic itself". *Ibid.* . pp. 116-17.

Ibid. . p. 116.

Ibid. . p. 117. "Le devoir ... favorise l'épanouissement du désir d'être, en introduisant, dans le jeu spontané des tendances, une rupture à la faveur de laquelle peut se dégager une aspiration qui passe la nature", Jacques Bauray, La Philosophie Religieuse de Jean Nabert, p. 69.

Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 117.

Ibid. . p. 118.

Ibid. . p. 119. "Le devoir n'est pas défini par Nabert comme une opposition à l'épanouissement de l'être et de ses tendances. Il ne serait alors opéré que par la crainte de sanctions encore plus contraignantes". Paule Levert, Jean Nabert ou l'Exigence absolue, p. 75.

Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 119.

Ibid.

Ibid. . p. 120. "Desir d'être, aspiration à une unification intérieure que la diversité des tendances risque de mettre en péril en jetant l'individu hors de lui-même, en le subordonnant à des objets qui finissent toujours par le décevoir. Le devoir peut masquer l'aspiration, mais ... il prépare les formes supérieures d'union et il serait vain de

croire que l'inspiration morale peut remplacer la loi et le respect de l'universel". Paule Levert, Jean Nabert ou l'Exigence absolue, p. 75.

201 Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, pp. 120-21. Later on Nabert will say this: "Awareness of our being obtained through duty, although abstract and incomplete with respect to the depths of our aspiration, still includes reflection on the relationship of our actions to our real will. Even though the self is in search of a deepening of self through unitive experiences or actions which go beyond duty, duty is a necessary test for a consciousness which questions itself about the relationship of its inner being to qualities implied in behavior ruled by the moral law. Whether the self undertakes to bend or adapt inclinations to duty, as happens in acts of virtue, or whether it seeks to be assured of the purity of its willing, it cannot avoid being in doubt. It doubts whether its act witnesses to a promotion of its being and to a true appropriation of the law whether the law remains foreign to its being unless there is adequation between the real motivation of its act and the reason of duty. In the movement which brings the self closer and closer to itself, the moment of duty is par excellence the one in which reflection on action can instruct it concerning its true being. In this middle region of duty, a synthetic relationship is unendingly formed between desire born of natural inclination and volition controlled by law. Law either beats down or always contradicts desire sufficiently so that, by means of the distance or the rapprochement between its nature and its act, the self can take possession of itself in reflection". Ibid., p. 159. Bauray writes that "le penchant pur est délivré par la soumission aux fins: ces fins sont celles du devoir: le devoir est lui-même une étape dans la communication des consciences". Jacques Bauray, La Philosophie Religieuse de Jean Nabert, p. 69.

202 Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 122. "Mediateur entre la liberté et la nature, tel apparaît le moment du devoir, de l'institution, de l'universel, bref: le moment de la raison. C'est dire qu'il permet à la nature d'être convertie à la liberté, mais aussi qu'il ne borne pas à lui-même l'épanouissement de la conscience: le devoir concerne la région moyenne de l'existence". Jacques Bauray, La Philosophie Religieuse de Jean Nabert, p. 70.

203 Nabert adds: "The institution succeeds insofar as it orients itself in the direction which would be that of the tendency if this latter could be fully conscious of the finality which it would serve as soon as it gave up posing itself separately and for itself and operated in full agreement with the central aspiration of the self, that is, with a willing which transcends all tendencies and which all

tendencies are invited to aid". Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 122.

---Ibid. , p. 123.

---Ibid. , p. 126.

---Ibid. "Le devoir , les institutions, l'ordre moral dont ils relevent sont une etape necessaire au progres de l'existence dans notre univers decadre, mais deja, dans Elements pour une ethique on aperçoit qu'ils sont seulement des moyens au service d'une aspiration qu'eux-mêmes ne peuvent compler". Paule Levert, Jean Nabert, ou l'Exigence absolue, p. 76.

--- Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 127.

Nabert continues to say: "Certainly there is no question of denying the diversity of moral vocations. However, just as the opposition between an ethic of intention and an ethic of consequences is sharp when it is detached from existence and formulated abstractly, so this opposition begins to be attenuated when it is related to the different moments of the expansion of desire. No moral theory of intention will require one to consider indifferently the content of decision if it remains attentive to the relationship between subjectivity and world. It is the unconditionality at the heart of aspiration which creates an apparent divorce between an ethic determined to avow only actions capable of giving satisfaction to the desire to be and an ethic anxious to retain among its givens the totality of conditions which arouses the division of minds, calls forth an order of their relations founded on the exact reciprocity, and maintains at the center of these relations the presence of a nature avaricious of its aid. No serious debate takes place in a soul without consciousness asking itself if it ought not to forgo its concern for reciprocity modeled on its certitude and its desire for unity. But what is this impatience worth if consciousness forgets that its hunger for the absolute can first of all find sustenance in the order of duty? Rather than be a sacrifice, its act could be an evasion. When the aid of law is lacking to the higher forms of existence, they are exposed to being marked with a character of insincerity and unreality". Ibid. , p. 128.

---Ibid. , p. 133.

---Ibid.

---Ibid. , p. 134.

---Habermas' model of "universal pragmatics" is formal and therefore would not be a satisfactory replica of

what constitutes for Nabert, I believe, a transcendental pragmatics. Cf. Jurgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp. 1-68.

--Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, pp. 140-41.

--Ibid., p. 139.

--Ibid., p. 140.

--Ibid., pp. 143-44.

--Ibid., p. 145.

--Ibid., p. 146.

--Ibid., pp. 146-47.

--Ibid., p. 147. "Pour Nabert ... c'est dans la certitude obtenue par l'approfondissement de la solitude que le moi tient. Si l'on peut dire, le modèle des modes absolus de communication avec les autres consciences, dépouillé de ses différences réelles dans la visée d'une absolue transparence à soi, le moi s'apparaissait comme la figure pure d'un moi pur. De même, la communication absolue des consciences s'effectue au-delà de la réciprocité du droit et du devoir, au-delà de la raison". Jacques Nauray, La Philosophie Religieuse de Jean Nabert, p. 74. "Notre existence comporte ce double rapport: tentation d'un repliement sur soi où la conscience s'obscurcit et risque de se perdre; désir de la communication où s'affirme le principe absolu de notre être véritable et qui exige le renoncement à soi". Paul Levert, "Louis Lavelle - Jean Nabert", Archives de Philosophie, 46, 1983, p. 57.

--Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 148.

--Maurice Blondel, Action, pp. 242-43.

--Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 149.

--Ibid., p. 157. Nabert also has this to say: "In particular, when confession concerns a past fault, its value for the promotion of being is a function of the kind of communication to which it is bound. The self which confesses and thus assumes actual responsibility for a past responsibility aspires to free itself from itself through the act in which it declares its fault and in which it becomes, it thinks, other than the self which committed the fault. It thinks that it is freer in the act of confession than it was

in the act which it confesses. But how great is its surprise when it discovers that other minds, seeing in the confession only the materiality of the fact, on the contrary identify the self which confesses with the one who was the author of the fault: the self sought communication, and the minds to which its appeal was addressed see in its act nothing but an authorization to break off all communication. Perhaps it responded to a question but receives no response from those who asked the question. Truth denounced the fault, but the act which spoke the truth was heard by no one. No consciousness gave echo to the desire for a witness, to the desire for communication. Everything changes if consciousness, which questions or listens, retaining in the confession only the appeal addressed to it and stripping away all other feeling, opens itself to communication. During this communication, by a reversal of the original situation, it will perhaps seek in the confession its own liberation in turn". Ibid. , pp. 156-57.

²²⁴Ibid. , p. 161:

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶Ibid. , pp. 161-2.

²²⁷Ibid. , pp. 171-2.

²²⁸Ibid. , p. 175.

²²⁹Ibid. , p. 182.

²³⁰Ibid. , pp. 182-83 Nabert also points out that "consciousness can and must have recourse to historical examples of moral sublimity which contrast the experience of nonfulfillment of its ambition with an irrefutable proof of what is at the origin of its effort". Ibid. , p. 183.

²³¹Ibid. , p. 184.

²³²Ibid. , pp. 184-5. In the only comparative study of Blondel and Nabert we note these observations by Virgoulay: "Pourtant, malgré certaines apparences, Blondel ne minimise pas le problème du mal. Tout au contraire, ne pourrait-on pas dire que l'Action dès l'overture si pascalienne, dramatise la vie humaine en posant l'angoissante question du sens de cette vie et cette destinée. Et tout son effort, au long d'une dialectique serrée et inexorable, consiste-il pas à ôter toute échappatoire, tout fauxfuyant, pour laisser la question se poser dans toute sa dureté, en se gardant bien d'apaiser l'inquietum cor? Nul n'a attiré, souligné plus nettement l'inadéquation toujours renaissante de la volonté voulue par rapport à la volonté voulante. En

outre, Blondel ne cache pas le risque de la perte liée à l'option mauvaise. Il détermine dans toute sa rigueur l'alternative suprême où les voies divergent irrémédiablement, à l'infini. Le rôle de la réflexion n'est que de clarifier l'enjeu et d'en mesurer la portée, non de trancher par une décision qui n'appartient qu'à la liberté vivante et à l'action responsable. Il est vrai que chez Blondel l'expérience du mal est moins thématifiée en termes de chute ou de faute qu'en termes de refus, elle est toujours située par rapport à l'onéreuse exigence du surnaturel, par rapport à l'impératif du denuo nasci; mais la sublimité de la promotion même du don infini. Ajoutons que la référence au mal n'est pas absente de la détermination de l'idée de médiation, puisque celle-ci est conçue comme salvifique Remarquons enfin que chez Nabert l'approche de l'idée de médiateur par l'expérience du pardon n'est qu'une approche particulière, car on doit étendre la fonction du médiateur jusqu'à la concevoir comme 'témoin absolu de l'absolu', le témoignage absolu étant celui d'une conscience à la fois pure et singulière: d'où l'effort que déploie la philosophie réflexive pour lever le scandale d'une inscription empirique dans l'histoire". René Virgoulay, "Réflexion Philosophique et Expérience Religieuse d'après L'Action de Maurice Blondel et Le Désir de Dieu de Jean Nabert", Revue des Sciences Religieuses, 49, 1975, pp. 347-48.

== Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 185. For some interesting observations on this matter: "Cette notion de vénération a une histoire dans la tradition philosophique, Descartes, en son Traité des Passions, voit en elle 'une inclination de l'âme, non seulement à estimer l'objet qu'elle révère, mais aussi à se soumettre à lui avec quelque crainte', en sorte que 'le mouvement des esprits qui excite la Vénération est composé de celui qui excite l'Admiration et de celui qui excite la Crainte'. Mais cette sorte de vénération n'a pas une signification proprement éthique, puisqu'elle s'adresse surtout, selon Descartes, à des 'causes libres que nous jugeons capables de nous faire du bien ou du mal sans que nous sachions lequel des deux elles feront'. Un jalon précieux est posé par Spinoza lorsque celle-ci montre que 'si ce que nous admirons est la sagesse (prudentia) d'un homme, son travail (industria) ou quelque chose de ce genre, comme par là même nous considérons que cet homme l'emporte de beaucoup sur nous, alors l'admiration se nomme Vénération (Veneratio)' et lorsqu'il indique que l'amour peut se joindre à l'admiration ou à la vénération pour engendrer la dévotion. Ainsi s'élabore progressivement l'idée d'une association entre respect et amour au cœur du sentiment de vénération, ainsi mis en rapport avec un certain 'sacré', dans la conviction que l'intelligence est faite pour aimer autant que pour comprendre. N'est-ce pas dans la même direction que va Kant l'autre modèle privilégié de Jean

Nabert, avec Biran - lorsqu'il fait du respect (Achtung) 'un tribut que nous ne pouvons refuser au mérite moral' et le définit comme 'un sentiment spécial provoqué par la reconnaissance d'une valeur morale dans une personne ou dans un idéal'. Le propre de ce sentiment singulier qui échappe à tout ce qu'il y a de 'pathologique' dans les sentiments ordinaires, c'est d'être 'aux ordres de la raison et même de la raison pratique'. A travers la personne respectée, c'est la loi morale illustrée par l'exemple de cette personne qui appelle notre vénération, car 'la loi morale', dit encore Kant, 'est sacré (inviolable). L'homme est sans doute assez loin de cette sainteté, mais l'humanité dans sa personne doit lui être sacrée'. L'authentique vénération est donc ascétique traversée des apparences empiriques en vue d'atteindre l'objet qui, seul, peut la justifier vraiment: l'esprit". André A. Devaux, "Sentiment de Vénération et Volonté d'Egalité à Soi-Même chez Jean Nabert", Les Etudes Philosophiques, No. 3, 1962, pp. 372- 73.

²³⁴Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, p. 186.

²³⁵Ibid. , pp. 191-92.

²³⁶Ibid. , p. 192.

²³⁷Ibid. , p. 193.

²³⁸Ibid. Again, Devaux makes interesting observations: "Nous ne commençons pas notre itinéraire moral, qui est, identiquement, l'itinéraire de la liberté, par la vénération, mais par de plus douloureuses expériences: la solitude, la faute, l'échec - à partir desquelles va s'exercer la réflexion, initiative radicale et toujours à reprendre, s'élevant à la certitude inconditionnée que je suis conscience pure, que je suis par elle, que je vaudrais par elle, et qu'en chaque homme il y a une semblable affirmation possible offerte à un approfondissement qui est le ressort même de l'éthique. Le danger serait, ici, de se croire trop vite arrivé au but et de s'installer dans la paix que procurent cette certitude intérieure de mon être idéal, d'un moi absolu assuré de sa vérité. La considération de la 'sublimité' de certaines actions, de certaines êtres, est un énergique rappel à l'humilité nécessaire et creuse en nous le stimulant sentiment d'une inadéquation entre le moi possible et le moi réel. En éprouvant, avec tout l'amertume requise mais sans désespérance, cette 'inégalité à soi' qui est aussi appel au dépassement, 'le moi réaffirme autant qu'il le vérifie, son rapport à la conscience pure de soi; il se protège contre la tentation et l'illusion de penser qu'il est devenu, par ses actions, le sujet d'une moralité réelle': l'enlèvement dans la satisfaction est exclu par une philosophie de la réflexion qui est spontanément éthique de

la vénération, puisqu'elle se donne pour tâche, selon l'expression de Jules Lagneau, de retrouver dans le moindre objet pensé toute la Pensée et ne saurait jamais se reposer dans le donné. En fixant mon attention sur les êtres supérieurs qui se revelent comme les organes du principe suprême j'éprouve une exaltation de la conscience qui assure le progres concret de l'existence. Ainsi se trouve verifié ce mot fameux d'Alain, selon lequel l'admiration est la lumière de l'esprit, car elle a le pouvoir de mettre en évidence l'intervalle qui me sépare toujours de ce que j'ai être et elle arrive en moi la certitude de la présence d'une causalité spirituelle grâce à laquelle l'affirmation rationnelle originaire qui me crée réclame que je me recrée sans cesse. Entre ce que je suis et le principe de ce que je suis, la distance demeure immense. La vénération est, pour moi, l'occasion répétée de mesurer cette distance et d'accepter lucidement la responsabilité d'une courageuse reprise de soi, jamais définitivement assurée, tant il est vrai, que le mal, le mal essentiel, c'est le fléchissement de l'attention spirituelle". André-A. Devaux, "Sentiment de Vénération et Volonté d'Égalité à Soi-même chez Jean Nabert, Les Études Philosophiques, pp. 373-74.

33 Jean Nabert, Elements for an Ethic, pp. 193-94.

34 Paul Ricoeur, "Nabert on Act and Sign", in The Conflict of Interpretations, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 211-222.

35 Maurice Blondel, Action, p. 358.

36 Ibid., p. 359.

37 Ibid., p. 360. Blondel's sense of his own destiny is expressed in this manner: "J'ai, comme tout homme, un rôle, une mission à remplir, une vocation. Et je me sens de plus en plus porté au dessein de montrer, par la pensée comme dans ma vie, la nécessité naturelle du surnaturelle et la réalité surnaturelle du naturel même. J'admire avec étroit d'amour et d'envie ces âmes qui vivent de foi, de sacrifice, d'immolation, comme une folie divine et un scandale: sans doute il faut être comme cela, on n'est pas chrétien sans cette mort: la pourtant n'est point, il me semble, mon don le plus apparent ni mon oeuvre particulière. J'ai à tracer les voies actuelles de la raison vers Dieu incarné et crucifié: J'ai à ménager les prétentions de la pensée moderne: J'ai à acheminer la science et la philosophie, par les méthodes mêmes qui leur sont chères et qu'elles ont raison d'aimer: J'ai à rester naturel aussi et plus longtemps que quiconque, afin de manifester plus uniment, plus péremptoirement, plus pacifiquement, plus largement, plus impérieusement, le besoin

inévitables du surnaturel. Combien peu sont disposés à suivre ces routes laborieuses, à ouvrir, parmi tant d'obstacles, ce chemin scientifique, à comprendre également les exigences légitimes de l'esprit moderne et les intransigeances redoutables de la vérité chrétienne, à parcourir tout l'entre-deux, et à jeter dans cet abîme, pour servir à le combler, sa vie, son cœur, sa pensée, sa raison, sa foi, son avenir dans le temps et dans l'éternité, tout soi-même? Il faut donc m'y consacrer. Il le faut". - 7 août, 1894, Maurice Blondel, Carnets Intimes I, pp. 525-26.

²⁴⁴Action, p. 361. Claude Tresmontant gives ample thought to Blondel's philosophical contribution with this commentary: "L'oeuvre de Blondel est en effet une oeuvre technique, scientifique, non pas seulement ni d'abord parce qu'elle est ouverte, selon la méthode aristotélicienne et thomiste, à l'enseignement des sciences positives, mais scientifique et technique en son ordre propre, l'ordre métaphysique. L'apologétique, nous l'avons vu, n'a jamais été chez Blondel, il le dit lui-même ... qu'un domaine exploré par suite de raisons occasionnelles et comme en marge de son effort philosophique. Le domaine propre de Blondel, c'est la métaphysique, l'ontologie. La langue de Blondel est belle, noble et claire comme son écriture manuscrite, mais l'oeuvre de Blondel est cependant difficile, parce que foncièrement technique, savante, longuement murie. Cela encore explique que Blondel ne soit pas 'à la mode' à une époque où la métaphysique technique ne l'est pas. Blondel revendique à plusieurs reprises le caractère technique et scientifique de son oeuvre, qui est proprement philosophique". Claude Tresmontant, Introduction à la métaphysique de Maurice Blondel, (Paris: Seuil, 1963), p. 19.

²⁴⁵Action, pp. 361-2. Blondel has this to say: "Quoi que certains aient prétendu, ce n'est donc ni une intention apologétique, ni une préoccupation de moraliste, ni un désir de réforme ou de nouveauté qui m'ont guidé durant le long itinéraire de mes aventures intellectuelles; et elles n'ont pas été sans péril ni souffrance. J'ai toujours principalement voulu faire oeuvre technique et autonome de philosophe, en continuité avec l'effort collectif et le sens traditionnel, sans autre ambition que d'explorer patiemment tout le champ accessible à la raison dans les questions mixtes, de préciser et d'entendre en ses extrêmes confins la compétence philosophique, de rappeler ou de porter à l'audience de tous les esprits critiques certains des problèmes premiers, ou derniers, dont ils s'étaient détournés ou que, faute de méthode appropriée, on n'avait pas expressément posés sur le terrain rationnel. En sorte que l'entreprise ainsi conçue ne peut réussir qu'en aboutissant à une doctrine intégrale de la Pensée, de l'Etre et de l'Action, à une philosophie qui ne soit ni 'séparée' ni

dépendante de la science non plus que de la religion positive, et qui, - religieuse par essence, mais non par accident, parti-pris ou surcroît, - cohabite spontanément, dans notre connaissance comme dans notre vie, avec la critique la plus intrepide et avec le catholicisme le plus authentique". Maurice Blondel, L'itinéraire philosophique de Maurice Blondel, propos recueillis par Frédéric Lefèvre. (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1966), pp. 21-22. On this issue Virgoulay writes this opinion: "Le dessin de Blondel a-t-il été d'élaborer une apologetique? Il convient de répondre avec beaucoup de nuances. Nul doute que l'intention subjective ait été d'abord apologetique. Blondel, en croyant convaincu, a voulu exprimer pour lui-même et pour les autres la justification réfléchie de sa foi. Mais, à partir de cette motivation subjective, il a construit une œuvre qui est, par nature, une philosophie et non une apologetique". René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme, p. 326. Blondel himself asks whether a Christian apologetique is possible: "Et y a-t-il, à proprement parler, une apologetique philosophique? Oui et non. Non, si l'on voulait que la philosophie se mit au service et se gageât pour ainsi parler: si l'on estimait que ses conclusions peuvent être homogènes, ou continues, ou subordonnées à celles de la théologie: si on lui demandait ou de reprendre à son compte des assertions qui excèdent sa compétence, ou de sacrifier, fût-ce sur un point, sa méthode et son autonomie scientifique. Oui, si il faut entendre que, tout à fait distincte, par la nature des questions posées et par la portée des conclusions, des autres formes de l'apologetique, la philosophie est seule capable d'écarter de leur route les objections préjudiciables, de déterminer la notion du surnaturel, et de mettre en pleine lumière les exigences et les insuffisances de la nature". Maurice Blondel, Lettres sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine en matière de l'apologetique, in Les premiers écrits de Maurice Blondel, pp. 47-48. for a fuller treatment of this see René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme, pp. 313-333.

--Action, p. 363.

--Ibid. "To one who pretends to be self-sufficient, any doctrine or any discipline that proposes itself as being of supernatural origin seems a more odious monstrosity than any superstition; superstition, at least, is only the more or less avowed invention of man and a kind of enterprise of the will in the universal mystery. - To one who has felt a desire for the infinite, to one conscious of the needs of consciousness, but without having entered sincerely into the narrow path of passing through death to life, about which we showed that it is the only road for a logical will, revelation, though perhaps awaited and called for, remains closed, scandalous, detestable from the moment it is not what

we would wish it to be". Action, pp. 363-64.

²⁴⁸Ibid. , p. 365.

²⁴⁹Ibid. "Au reste les preuves de fait ne valent que pour ceux qui sont intimement prêts à les accueillir et à les comprendre; voilà pourquoi les miracles qui éclairent les uns aveuglent les autres. Parlons à la rigueur des termes: comme pour la philosophie aucun des faits contingents n'est impossible; comme l'idée de lois générales et fixes dans la nature et l'idée de nature elle-même n'est qu'une idole; comme chaque phénomène est un cas singulier et une solution unique, il n'y a sans doute, si l'on va au fond des choses, rien de plus dans le miracle que dans le moindre des faits ordinaires. Mais aussi il n'y a rien de moins dans le plus ordinaire des faits que dans le miracle. Le sens de ces coups d'état qui provoquent la réflexion à des conclusions plus générales en rompant l'assoupissement de la routine, c'est de révéler que le divin est, non pas seulement dans ce qui semble dépasser le pouvoir accoutumé de l'homme et de la nature, mais partout, là même où nous estimerions volontiers que l'homme et la nature se suffisent. Les miracles ne sont donc vraiment miraculeux qu'au regard de ceux qui sont déjà murs pour reconnaître l'action divine dans les événements les plus habituels. D'où il résulte que la philosophie qui pécherait contre sa propre nature en les niant, n'est pas moins incompétente pour les affirmer, et qu'ils sont un témoignage écrit dans une autre langue que celle dont elle est juge". Maurice Blondel, Lettre sur les exigences de la pensée contemporaine, p. 14.

²⁵⁰Action, p. 365. "It is therefore only in an emptiness of the heart, it is in souls of silence and good will that a revelation makes itself effectively hear from the outside. It is worthy to be received only in virtue of what makes it contemptible and hateful to others. the sound of words and the sudden appearance of signs would undoubtedly be nothing, if there were not interiorly an intention of accepting the desired light, a sensitivity already prepared to judge of the divinity of the word heard. Men have always been on the alert to hear and to see, to receive what men cannot see and hear without dying". Ibid. p. 366.

"L'extrinsécisme et l'historicisme sont, du problème essentiel qui est aujourd'hui posé devant la conscience chrétienne, deux solutions diversement incomplètes, mais également périlleuses pour la foi; ce sont deux extrêmes opposés, mais du même genre, et se fondant sur de mêmes habitudes d'esprit, souffrant d'analogues lacunes philosophiques, s'aggravant par leur conflit même. Quiconque, voulant soumettre ses croyances à un examen réfléchi et se gouverner d'après ses conclusions critiques, s'inspirerait de l'une ou l'autre de ces thèse exclusives, risquerait d'être perdu pour la foi". Maurice Blondel, Histoire et Dogme, in Les Premiers Ecrits, pp. 154-55. "L'extrinsécisme et l'historicisme ont une illusion ou un préjugé commun, c'est de prendre l'idée pour le double ou le substitut adéquat et comme interchangeable de la réalité. L'extrinséciste fait comme si l'inspiration divine garantissait en bloc le contenu de la Bible, indépendamment de ce contenu lui-même. On voit le même fait se reproduire dans l'apologétique; comme si le raisonnement par lui-même produisant la vérité, comme si la preuve démontrait le surnaturel d'une évidence contraignante, au point qu'une fois compris l'agencement des raisons, il n'y avait pas d'autre alternative que l'automatisme de la foi ou la mauvaise foi du refus. On sait combien Blondel a réagi contre cette déformation qui n'était pas chimérique, et qui revenait à méconnaître, non seulement la dimension subjective de l'acte de foi, mais aussi ses composantes proprement surnaturelles, dans la mesure où elles ne se réduisent pas à la dialectique intellectuelle. De son côté, l'historicisme commet une méprise semblable. Plus ou moins consciemment en effet, il en vient à identifier le témoignage historique (d'ailleurs réduit au document écrit) à la réalité même de l'histoire. C'est encore prendre l'idée, la représentation, pour l'objet". René Virgoulay, Blondel et le Modernisme, pp. 439-440.

²⁵¹Action, p. 367. Jacques Flamand makes an important observation on the corpus of Blondel: "Si le dessein de Dieu est un, la pensée et l'action des hommes doivent eles aussi tendre à l'unité.... Blondel a eu une vision une du dessein de Dieu sur la création, grâce à son sens christologique particulièrement aigu. Pour lui, il

n'y a pas deux étapes juxtaposées, l'une la création, l'autre la rédemption, mais une seule intention divine, créatrice et élevant. Envisageant toute chose à partir du Verbe incarné, il a considéré l'Incarnation comme le sommet de la création. C'est dire que l'unité du dessein de Dieu se synthétise, se condense en Jésus-Christ. Certes, dans le déroulement spatiotemporel du plan de Dieu, on verrait la parfaite unité du dessein divin: la création appelant l'incarnation rédemptrice, non seulement pour sauver mais pour élever". Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, pp. 186-87.

²⁵² Action, p. 369.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 371. "For it is not from thought that faith passes over into the heart, it is from practice that it draws down a divine light for the spirit. God acts in this action and that is why the thought that follows the act is richer by an infinity than that which precedes it. It has entered into a new world where no philosophical speculation can lead or follow it". Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Blondel adds that "even supposing that this theandric action is founded entirely on the divine will, the human will remains coextensive to it. It is a gift, but a gift we acquire as if it were an earning". Ibid. Blondel, in a footnote, quotes Saint Bernard's Tractatus de Gratia et Libero Arbitrio, ch. XIV, no. 47. "La philosophie reconnaît donc ainsi son pouvoir et sa limite, la reconnaissance de cette limite étant elle-même une manière d'exercer ce pouvoir. Non seulement elle accepte que la réalisation du surnaturel dans le donné religieux lui échappe, mais elle exige qu'il en soit ainsi. Sans cet écart et cette réserve, on pourrait à bon droit soupçonner le surnaturel d'être un pur produit de la subjectivité; si l'alterité du donné religieux était reductible, ne serait-ce pas le meilleur signe de son origine purement immanente et de son caractère exclusivement naturel? Que voudrait un surnaturel qui ne serait pas mortifiant pour la raison et la volonté? Il doit subsister toujours quelque chose d'irréductible aux clartés rationnelles, une hétéronomie à consentir. Du surnaturel la raison elle-même exige qu'il soit ce qu'il doit être, c'est-à-dire exigeant pour elle. Dégager l'aspect d'immanence des obligations morales et religieuses, ce n'est pas réduire à l'idée qu'on en a. ce n'est pas vouloir que cette idée se substitue à l'action qu'elle appelle. La méthode d'immanence aboutit à poser des nécessités, c'est sa force et aussi sa limite, car elle peut les dégager du réel et les prescrire à la réalisation, mais les réaliser par elle-même; l'action est insuppléable". René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme,

pp. 34041.

²⁵⁶Action, p. 372.

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 373. "L'acte de foi n'est pas seulement celui d'une faculté, il résulte du dynamisme total du processus de connaître. Il met en oeuvre la spontanéité indivisible de l'esprit, tout ce que Blondel entend par le mot action, une plénitude située en deçà et constituant la racine commune des facultés distinctes et des spécialisations ultérieures. C'est donc le dynamisme complet de l'esprit, avec les ressources conjointes de l'intelligence et de la volonté, qui s'exerce dans l'adhésion de foi. La présence de l'option à la connaissance en fait en même temps une démarche de la liberté et lui donne sa densité existentielle. Ainsi donc, pour établir l'intégralité de la démarche et pour équilibrer un intellectualisme trop exclusif, Blondel est amené à souligner le rôle déterminant de la volonté. L'intelligence seule permet de justifier un jugement de crédibilité, en montrant qu'il y a des raisons de croire; elle ne suffit pas à porter un jugement de crédence, à établir qu'il faut croire. Or c'est dans ce passage de la crédibilité à la crédence que la volonté intervient d'une manière décisive, selon le mot de S. Thomas "in cognitione fidei principalitatem habet voluntas". René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme, p. 344.

²⁵⁸Action, p. 373. "Blondel ne rejette donc pas le caractère intellectuelle de la foi, mais il conçoit et situe l'intelligence d'une manière qui relève de sa théorie générale, et originale, de la connaissance. Dans ce contexte, le rôle de la volonté apparaît comme intérieur au processus de la connaissance. Car l'action, il faut le rappeler sans cesse, n'est pas un pragmatisme aveugle ni corrélativement la pensée un intellectualisme abstrait. Une 'science du sujet', c'est-à-dire de toutes les conditions réelles de la connaissance naturelle comme de la foi, est possible, parce que l'intelligibilité du réel ne se réduit pas à la zone moyenne du concept, de l'idée claire et distincte; celle-ci n'est qu'un extrait du processus total. Le dynamisme de l'action tend à s'égaliser à la réalité même sans jamais pouvoir la posséder, entièrement et cette incessante propulsion constitue la vie de l'esprit. L'exercice de l'intelligence apparaît alors comme l'expression et le fruit d'un dynamisme antérieur et il est à son tour le départ, le germe d'une activité ultérieure, d'une tension vers le réel mieux éclairé et par conséquent mieux saisi. La gnoseologie blondélienne distingue donc l'état premier qui est le donné existentiel, le réel déjà présent certes mais encore voilé, préreflexif, cet implicite pouvant être prégnant de grâce surnaturelle. Vient ensuite la phase conceptuelle qui est le produit et pour une part l'expression de cette réalité

première à qui elle se rattache et dont elle tire son contenu et son mouvement; c'est à ce niveau que s'explicitent les raisons de croire, que se forme le jugement de crédibilité, en tant que thématization du mouvement intérieur de la grâce. Mais cette connaissance est de soi morcelante, objectivante et, pour une part, artificielle. Il ne faut donc pas la considérer d'une manière abstraite, en la coupant de ses attaches d'origine et de sa destination finale. Ce serait nuire à sa valeur cognitive même et la réduire au plus pauvre et au plus déformant des savoirs, la connaissance

notionnelle. Cette connaissance est un savoir objectivant qui procède par mise à distance, par éloignement de la réalité. C'est pourquoi elle doit être rattachée au terme supérieur qui l'accomplit en la referant à l'action, conséquence qu'elle contribue à éclairer et à produire. Elle retrouve ainsi sa densité existentielle en renouant le lien originnaire avec l'Être que la phase objective avait provisoirement distendu. Mais le détour par l'objectivation donne à cette restitution de la communion ontologique un caractère conscient et voulu. Alors se trouvent réunies les conditions de l'option et, sur le plan de la connaissance surnaturelle, de l'acte de foi". René Virgoulay, Blondel et le Modernisme, pp. 346-47.

-5- Action, p. 373.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid., p. 374. Cf. "Le désir de Dieu se confond avec la désir d'une compréhension de soi. Ce dernier surgit dans la conscience qui s'éprouve à tout instant capable de se reprendre sur ce qu'elle est et sur ce qu'elle a fait, sur une négativité dont elle ne cesse d'être affectée et qui fait qu'elle est, en effet, une conscience singulière, dans une subjectivité dont elle ne peut se dépendre, et tout ensemble, aspirant à une délivrance, à une justification, et puisant dans cette aspiration la possibilité d'une délivrance, l'espérance d'une délivrance. Ce dédoublement de la conscience enveloppe un pouvoir de reprise sur soi pour une compréhension de soi. À beaucoup d'égards, ce pouvoir, c'est le refus de se contondre avec ce qu'elle est ou ce qu'elle a été. Mais ce refus se lie au refus d'une compréhension de soi qui se ferait par les catégories de l'objet. Elle ne peut entreprendre de se saisir ou de se comprendre comme une créature, sans découvrir que cette relation peut bien s'appliquer à ce qu'il y a en elle de donné, qui la rend solidaire du monde mais non pas du tout à ce qui, en elle, échappe radicalement à cette dépendance, dans l'activité réflexive elle-même. Son désir de Dieu est lié à la découverte d'une sorte d'aliénation fondamentale et au sentiment de l'impossibilité de s'élever à soi, et, en même temps, et solidairement, à une réflexion sur ce pouvoir

qu'elle est de n'être rien de ce qui est objet, d'être conscience pure et une conscience aliénée. Cette possibilité de reprise sur soi pour une compréhension de soi, c'est un acte, c'est la conscience de l'intériorité, c'est l'intériorité spirituelle. Or, cette structure de la conscience de soi qui fait qu'elle est pouvoir de ne se subordonner à rien, d'être précisément transcendante à tout ce qu'elle comprend et à tout ce qu'elle fait et a fait, c'est la pensée de l'inconditionné, non pas de ce qui est sans cause, mais de ce qui est étranger à la causalité qui vaut pour tout l'étant. La pensée de l'inconditionné et l'intériorité pure sont deux termes identiques. Plus exactement, c'est la pensée de l'inconditionné qui se fait et devient affirmation de soi dans et par une conscience singulière. Ce n'est pas union du fini et de l'infini, mais affirmation, parce que c'est seulement sous la forme de l'affirmation de soi que la pensée de l'inconditionné s'identifie à soi. La dualité n'est jamais supprimée. L'unité n'est jamais rompue. C'est le rapport de la pensée à la conscience qui est en question. Veut-on que la pensée déborde la conscience et que ce soit elle qui soit première par rapport à la conscience de soi? Encore faut-il que la réflexion de la pensée sur elle-même se fasse conscience de soi dans l'acte de son exercice. L'idée de l'inconditionné relève bien de la pensée, mais l'appropriation de cette idée, l'actualité de cette idée relève de l'acte de conscience. L'affirmation originale n'est rien moins que la pensée de l'inconditionné se faisant acte, acte pour soi, donc acte d'une conscience singulière. C'est le pour soi, et le par soi, et l'identité de l'un et de l'autre. Et, dans ce par soi et ce pour soi, la conscience pure de soi. L'effort vers la compréhension de soi et le désir de Dieu ne conduisent pas à la découverte d'une dépendance du soi, mais à l'intériorité elle-même, c'est-à-dire à la négation de l'objet, à la négation de toute objectivité et de toutes les catégories, par lesquelles la pensée pense l'objet. C'est la pensée de l'inconditionné dans l'acte même où elle s'identifie avec l'acte d'une conscience dans son effort pour se comprendre dans sa vérité. C'est la suppression des questions que la conscience ne cesse d'être tentée de se poser sur soi (comme si la question pouvait encore avoir un sens), comme s'il y avait un au-delà de cette affirmation qui la fonderait et la relativiserait". Jean Nabert, Le Désir de Dieu, préface de Paul Ricoeur, (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1966), pp. 21-22.

262 Action, p. 374. "C'est de cette manière que la méthode d'immanence permet d'examiner le surnaturel, non comme réel, non comme possible, mais comme nécessaire". Et Blondel d'expliquer qu'il ne faut pas comprendre cette nécessité au sens ontologique, comme s'il s'agissait d'existence ou de vérité absolue". René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme, p. 291. Cf. "La façon dont Blondel manie

l'hypothèse nécessaire du surnaturel prouve à elle seule que sa critique opère sur des faits qu'elle constitue en science, tout en réservant leur réalité. Elle n'est pas une logique hypothético-déductive. Elle est une logique ontologique, une logique de l'être nécessaire". Henry Duméry, Raison et Religion dans la Philosophie de l'Action, p. 387.

223 In a footnote, Blondel writes: "It as soon as philosophy touches on the simple notion of the supernatural one dreads an abuse of power or a confusion of competences, it is because one knows nothing of the essence of this supernatural itself". Action, p. 374.

224 Ibid. , p. 375.

225 To those who find receipts and mechanical behavior or practice repugnant and that it profanes their ineffable feelings Blondel sympathizes but also answers: "I would wish to show them that the broadest and deepest faith finds its perfection in very precise acts, that this lowly and even humiliating practice alone preserves all the nobility and the purity of the interior cult, and that, if there is a letter where only death and corruption dwell, there is a necessary one that carries with it life and salvation". Ibid.

226 Cf. "Faith.... has a body". William F. Lynch, Images of Faith: An Exploration of the Ironic Imagination, (Notre Dame: The University of Notre-Dame Press, 1973), p. 13. Blondel is quick to point out, that in the most simple acts, "there is more infinite than in the haughtiest speculations or in the most exquisite feelings". Action, p. 376.

227 Ibid. , p. 377.

228 "C'est grâce au rôle de la volonté que s'opère la spécification de l'acte surnaturel de foi par l'objet formel, c'est-à-dire que par là l'adhésion subjective est elle-même surnaturalisée. Puisque la foi est d'ordre surnaturel, il faut que le motif de la foi le soit également. On ne peut donc s'en tenir aux raisons naturelles de croire (au niveau du jugement de crédibilité). Or, c'est par la volonté que s'insinue dans le processus de la foi la grâce qui va rendre ce processus homogène en le surnaturalisant tout entier, y compris au niveau de la crédibilité qui dès lors ne constituera plus simplement un préalable mais sera partie intégrante de l'acte de foi. Cela correspond parfaitement à la conception de l'action; elle est théandrique, elle est le lieu où la liberté humaine et la grâce divine se rencontrent et coopèrent mystérieusement; d'où le surcroît de certitude et de lumière qui rejaillit sur le

dynamisme de l'intelligence et opère le passage de la crédibilité à la crédentité". René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme, p. 345. Virgoulay also adds that, "C'est sur ce rôle de la volonté qu'une telle conception de la foi a suscité le plus d'opposition de la part des théologiens. Certes, ceux-ci admettaient bien une influence de la volonté, mais une influence extérieure consistant à confirmer et à renforcer les conclusions préalables de l'entendement. Ils n'admettaient pas que les dispositions ordonnées au bien soient elles-mêmes éclairantes, voulant réserver en ce domaine le monopole de l'intelligence". Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Action, p. 378.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid. , pp. 378-79.

²⁷² Ibid. , p. 379.

²⁷³ L'Action (1893), pp. 412-13.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. , p. 413. For Blondel's critique of the Protestant view of 'good works', see Action, pp. 380-81.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. , p. 382.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Blondel maintains that "to shy away from acts under pretext that they are an external and demeaning constraint is to fail the spirit that secretly demands this elevating submission.... the religious act cannot be a symbol: either it is or it is not a reality. For the essential relations of man with the absolute to be established in a precise way, they have to be defined absolutely and in this divine commerce there has to be a gift and a consecration which cannot come from us. If the good cannot be realized in man except through finite acts, still by a supernatural condescendence this finite itself must be given as the garb, better still, as the very body of the transcendent. If God does not place Himself therein for man to find Him there and nourish himself thereby, man will not place him there". Ibid. , p. 383. Duméry offers this comment: "On connaît la paradoxe de l'Action: l'achèvement de l'agir, comme équation du vouloir, n'est possible qu'à Dieu, à Dieu s'offrant en personne, communiquant son intimité, la faisant partager. Blondel discerne dans la volonté voulante une infinitude que la volonté voulu, que les choix délibérés, ne récupèrent jamais entièrement. Plus, il tient que cette infinitude implique un vouloir devenir Dieu; il tient que la volonté voulu ne s'y égale que dans un cas: si Dieu se

donne". Henry Dumery, Raison et Religion dans la Philosophie de l'Action, p. 112.

²⁷⁰Action, p. 383. Blondel also writes, "To be sure, practice does not work either through blind magic or through brute mechanism; there are dead acts, without spirit and without soul, external devotion, as vain as or worse than any other superstition" Ibid. "Le don surnaturel reçu dans la foi a donc son origine et son fondement dans la personne du Christ, le Verbe incarné médiateur qui nous appelle à une destinée surnaturelle. Et d'autre part il est reçu dans l'Eglise qui, sous la conduite du magistère - et d'un magistère qui est pastoral - a mission et pouvoir d'être l'agent médiateur entre l'homme et Dieu, en prolongement de l'action médiatrice du Verbe Incarné.... On se retrouve donc, là encore, au fondement et à la source de toutes choses et de toutes grâces". Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, pp. 462-63.

²⁷¹L'Action(1893), p. 418.

²⁷²Action, p. 385.

²⁷³Ibid.

²⁷⁴L'Action(1893), pp. 421-22.

²⁷⁵Ibid. , p. 422.

²⁷⁶Ibid. , pp. 422-23. This marks the end of the doctoral thesis, whose original French version ended with XXV-433 pages of which 146 copies were printed. A commercial edition of the work was published later in the same year which was augmented and revised after page 401. It was augmented to 495 pages and 750 copies were printed. The issue which I am using is the 1950 reprint by Presses Universitaires de France. Cf. James Somerville, Total Commitment, footnote, p. 17.

²⁷⁷"What had appeared up to now, in a regressive analysis, as a series of necessary conditions and of the means successively required to constitute action little by little, henceforth, in a synthetic view, will reveal itself as a system of real truths and of being simultaneously ordered". Action, p. 389.

²⁷⁸Ibid. , p. 384.

²⁷⁹L'Action(1893), pp. 424-25.

²⁸⁰Action, p. 390.

²⁸⁹ L'Action (1893), p. 425.

²⁹⁰ Action, p. 390. Blondel, however, warns us that "we also run the risk of attributing to each of the successive observations an already metaphysical meaning which they did not have". Ibid.

²⁹¹ Blondel maintains that the proofs for the existence of God are valid by the spirit that inspires them, not by the form of the argumentation. Ibid. Joseph Donceel states that the proofs, when taken together, "they tend to coincide with our vital dynamism and offer a real demonstration". Joseph F. Donceel, The Searching Mind: An Introduction to a Philosophy of God, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 99.

²⁹² Ibid. , p. 391.

²⁹³ Ibid. , pp. 391-92.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. , p. 392.

²⁹⁵ L'Action (1893), p. 428.

²⁹⁶ Action, p. 392.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid. , p. 393.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. "The option does not make this knowledge more objective, in the sense that there is a better adequatio rei et intellectus. The subjective knowledge is the best possible adequatio rei et intellectus. Nothing can improve on it. The option produces an adequatio mentis et vitae. 'La vue de la vérité' becomes 'la vie de la vérité'. It brings thought alive, it makes the knowledge of the truth a possession or privation of the truth. It is a different way of knowing without change of object: "speculative knowledge of the truth becomes effective knowledge of the truth, cognition becomes agnition. Although subjective knowledge always implies and underlies objective knowledge, the option decides whether subjective knowledge becomes effective or privative". Leo J. Zonneveld, "Maurice Blondel: Action and the Concept of Christian Philosophy", in John R. Ryan, ed. Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, Volume 5, Ancients and Moderns, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1970), pp. 265-66.

³⁰⁰ "Le consentement, le oui à l'option, manifeste au contraire l'ouverture infinie que procure la médiation de l'action bonne. Mais, bonne ou mauvaise, l'action est

médiatrice. Elle juge l'agent moral qui opte ainsi, infiniment, dans les deux cas. Vouloir infiniment le fini, vouloir infiniment l'infini, telle est l'alternative, telle, la réponse apportée par la médiation de l'action humaine". Jacques Flamand, L'idée de médiation chez Maurice Blondel, p. 399.

³⁰¹Action, p. 393. Blondel divides this question into three ways: 1. How does thought inevitably conceive the reality of all the objects that have appeared as means for the will or conditions for action? 2. What, in the inevitable conception of being, can we reject and what remains of this necessary reality in the thought which excludes it or in the will which runs away from it? 3. What does a free admission, a practical adherence add to the being necessarily conceived and the truth inevitably recognized"? Ibid.

³⁰²Ibid.

³⁰³Ibid., p. 394.

³⁰⁴Ibid. "As the subtitle of L'Action indicates, Blondel views the work as a Critique of Life. But what the critique uncovers are not Kantian conditions of possibility, deduced by an analysis of the various types of judgements. Whether or not they are real, whether or not they are to be regarded initially as only transcendental conditions for the possibility of experience, is not Blondel's primary concern. What is important is that they are necessary in the practical order. Perhaps they are also real; perhaps they are the conditions for experience in this or in any other possible world. But a judgement of this kind can only come at the end. Meanwhile, the important thing is to make sure that all the practical conditions and necessities have been inventoried". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 285-86.

³⁰⁵For the general properties of Open Hierarchical Systems see Appendix I in Arthur Koestler, The Ghost in the Machine, (London: Pan Books, 1970), pp. 383-390.

³⁰⁶Action, p. 395.

³⁰⁷See Appendix I, "Beyond Atomism and Holism - The Concept of the Holon" in Arthur Koestler, Janus: A Summing Up, (London: Picador, Pan books, 1983), pp.289-311.

³⁰⁸L'Action(1893), pp. 432-33.

³⁰⁹Action, p. 396.

³¹⁰Ibid. "It is impossible to pose the intellectual

problem of being without conceiving ourselves with the moral problem of our being. This is what we might call the 'existential' manner of approaching the problem of objectivity in terms of a subject-object polarity. But it can also be treated in terms of the mutual implication of the universal and the particular: we cannot affirm the reality of the whole system without also implicitly affirming the reality of the particular objects and terms that constitute it". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 298-99.

³¹¹ L'Action(1893), p. 435.

³¹² Action, p. 398.

³¹³ L'Action(1893), pp. 435-36.

³¹⁴ Action, p. 399.

³¹⁵ Ibid. "Thus, in closing ourselves off from the obligations which appeared to us as the vivifying conditions of voluntary action, we close off at the same time access to, we deprive ourselves of the possession of the reality known !...". Ibid., p. 400.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid. On this issue Somerville writes: "Thus, while in the abstract one can speak of the option which embraces the whole in a generic and confused manner - and this would express a basic attitude of openness - in the concrete and practical order the option always bears on the whole in terms of some particular alternative that arises within the series of means. That is why, for example, the option for or against the supernatural, though it deals with only one level in the hierarchy, can actually stand for the option that embraces the whole. But it is not unique in this respect. Much has been written on the question of whether or not the Great Option for or against the supernatural is to be identified with the Metaphysical Option. No more, we believe, than any of the lesser options that have been encountered as alternatives in the series. Methodologically, the option involving the supernatural arises later and it presupposes all of the conditions that have preceded it; but it is by no means the last in the series, nor does it have to be explicitly known in order to engender the notion and experience of the objective existence that is the ground of metaphysics. Any link in the chain can become matter for an option, and, implicitly, for the option that involves the whole. All that is required is that we do not halt the sursum of the will at any point along the way or refuse to remain open to the further implications of action. It is true that, lest the openness of the will remain indeterminate, the option must be made in terms of some particular alternative; but no term in the series enjoys a privileged status in this regard". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 301.

³¹⁸ L'Action(1893), p. 438.

³¹⁹ Action, p. 401. "Every individual is ineffable, incommensurable, infinite and transcendent with respect to its inferior conditions (and, in the context, Blondel is referring to the individual stages of the dialectic). But at

the same time each level in the hierarchy of means and ends communicates with all its antecedents and implicates all that is to follow. So the whole is implied in each particular level. If the particular stage is isolated from the rest, it becomes abstract and unreal, a mere extract from the current of life. If it is seen in context, it becomes necessary and inevitable, sharing in the universality of the law of continuity which governs the expansion of action". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 304-5.

³²⁰Action, p. 401. "In order to reject the ontological status of objectivity that necessarily makes its appearance in us, one must know it and affirm its intelligibility while denying its legislative function. Action always retains some aspect of the contrary that has been excluded. Thus, the negative or privative option cannot destroy or annihilate the real being that it knows and rejects; it can only deprive the subject of the possession of what is necessarily known and necessarily desired. What results is a positive privation of being in the knower, steresis, and the intellectual difference between the two types of knowing is measured by the abyss that stands between the empty and the full, between sterility and fecundity. The affirmative option, on the other hand, subsumes the necessary idea of objectivity and, through the mediation of the action of the free will, produces a synthesis of thought and being, of truth and reality. Thought is no longer of being, but being is found in thought, so that what is known is not merely the thought of being but being in thought. What was necessary, but represented as exterior to and distinct from what is free, now becomes coextensive with what is freely willed, and the adequation of the volonte voulante and the volonte voulee is attainable, at least in principle". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 308-9.

³²¹Action, p. 401.

³²²Ibid., p. 402. "In the man who acts as if beings were without Being and who accepts the means without directing them toward his end, the will continues to produce the exigency for all the being which knowledge requires, and knowledge shows the will all the necessary being it excludes: knowledge affirms the infinite we need to the one who has negated it, but in order to refuse all that it affirms to the negator". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 401-2.

³²³L'Action (1893), pp. 439-440.

³²⁴Action, p. 402.

³²⁵Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid. p. 403.

³²⁷ L'Action (1893), p. 441.

³²⁸ Action, p. 404. "The purity of interior detachment from the self is the organ of perfect vision, for it enables us to go directly to Him. Even an authentic knowledge of other persons depends on this total dedication to the Creator. We cannot penetrate another person, nor even our deepest self, without reference to the Uniquely Necessary as the source of all value". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 311.

³²⁹ Action, p. 404.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid. p. 406.

³³⁴ Ibid. , p. 407. "Death is the triumph of love and access to life; it becomes like a duty; and duty is nothing else but death". Ibid. Somerville comments: "The supreme sacrifice does more than edify; it gathers into one concentrated act the dispersed and latent energy of love. It releases on the earth a vital force that moves all men closer to the goal of a unity that preserves the uniqueness and distinction among persons by refusing to make any distinction among them". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 313.

³³⁵ Action, p. 408.

³³⁶ Ibid. , p. 409. "We are beings only within Being". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 315.

³³⁷ L'Action (1893), p. 448.

³³⁸ Action, p. 410. "If the inner existential bond is an action and a realizing relation that is itself real, it not only gives being and unity to individuals but also to the community of individuals. Persons acquire reality before one another in virtue of a prior relational bond whose action envelops them. All are equally real. If true human being and dignity are denied to one, then they are denied to all. The whole community suffers when even the least of its members is deprived of his freedom or treated as something less than human; for this is to challenge his irreducible objectivity and autonomy and, in effect, to deny that he shares in the realizing action that communicates reality to the whole".

James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 315-6.

³³⁷L'Action(1893), p. 449.

³⁴⁰Action, p. 411.

³⁴¹Ibid. "What individuates and makes objective appearance possible is matter. For Blondel, matter is not simply a principle of division or extension, but the vehicle for the outer manifestation of the inner relational bond. Matter is found wherever there is multiplicity; wherever there is unity in diversity. It accounts not only for the fact that beings are initially exterior to one another, but also for their ability to communicate and reveal themselves to one another. In this sense it is a kind of vicergent for the interior bond. It is like the sea which both separates continents and is also a highway for the commerce that unites them. Matter forms the body of action, manifesting the presence of the unifying inner source, enabling the realizata to share in the being of the realizans. It is thus inseparable from the source from which it emanates, even though the sum of all possible manifestations cannot equal the initiating action of the subject that produces them. Finally, ... matter is a constitutive principle of all finite beings, or at least of those finite beings that we experience.... Matter acts as a prism which refract and diversifies the action of the pure Subject; it also functions as a protective shield which screens but the overwhelming brilliance of an infinite truth, allowing only enough light to filter through so that it will not exceed the threshold of man's cognitive powers. Nature is this screen which partly reveals and partly obscures the infinite source". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 317-8.

³⁴²Action, pp. 411-12:

³⁴³L'Action(1893), p. 451.

³⁴⁴Action, p. 412.

³⁴⁵Ibid., p. 413. The mixture of "knowledge produced and knowledge undergone, says Somerville, was "Kant's great discovery when he saw that the objectivity of knowledge cannot be explained by the mechanics of passive reception alone, as though it were a mere photographic reproduction of things as they exist outside the mind. Cognition also requires a subjective initiative. But he immediately lost the value of this insight when he transferred the whole question of objectivity to the subjective realm; for he was then forced to set up a subject-object duality within the subject. Since the objectively real cannot be found in sensibility alone, it

must be the work of understanding. But no sooner are we introduced to the concepts of the understanding than we find that they are empty laws of the mind whose bare intelligibility can only be expressed in analytic judgements that have no power to reveal the structure of an objectively real world. Finally, when it turns out that even the 'experience', which results when the manifold of sensibility is subsumed under the forms of the understanding, provides no insight into the structure of an extramental order, Kant is then forced to postulate that the really real is in some unknowable archive which faith alone can penetrate.... All this could be avoided if philosophers would stop trying to isolate the real by assigning it to one of the terms in the series (or even beyond it), or by conferring a privileged status on some particular term. All the terms are, alike, phenomena, which is not to say that they are unreal or mere illusions. On the contrary, it means that all are equally real, as long as we do not divorce them from their contextual role in the total system of objects and operations, where they receive their reciprocal solidarity. From the point of view of being, then, there are no rich and poor in the 'democracy of heterogeneously linked and irreducible moments'. James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 322-23.

³⁴⁶Action, p. 413.

³⁴⁷L'Action(1893), pp. 452-53.

³⁴⁸Action, p. 414.

³⁴⁹Ibid.

³⁵⁰Ibid. "What we call the real stands in a mediating position, at the apex or turning point, between the two subjective movements of the will, and between the receptive and productive operations of cognition. It is the bond which makes possible the communication between the volonté voulante and the volonté voulue and between the two phases of knowledge". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 323.

³⁵¹Action, p. 414. "Things are not because we make them be; but they are such as we make them be, and such as they make us be". Ibid.

³⁵²How then understand that we are what we know and that what we know is? Ibid.

³⁵³Ibid., p. 415.

³⁵⁴Ibid.

³⁵⁵Ibid.

³⁵⁶Ibid. "They are, because reason sees them and penetrates the secret of their production. They are, because the senses undergo them all and become passive to their action". Ibid. , pp. 415-16.

³⁵⁷L'Action(1893), pp. 455-56.

³⁵⁸Action, p. 416. "From one point of view, then, the universe is simply my representation of it, but it is also the conclusion and cause of this representation. Thus, a landscape is perceived as a unity because of the unifying action of the subject, but this presupposes an object and an extra-mental harmony of line and color. So, while we are in things because of the activity of a reason which penetrates them and discerns relations and the intelligible law of their constitution, they are in us because the senses passively receive them.... Objectivity requires production as well as reception, conception as well as perception. To be real things must act on us; but if they are to act on us truly, we must also actively receive them. We act on them as much as they act on us; and if we perceive them only because they are, they are for us because we perceive them. In other words, production and reception must be taken conjunctively, otherwise we drift either toward idealism (esse est percipi) or towards a gross objective realism. To say that the reality of things depends on thought is no more true to say that it is entirely independent of it. There would be no consciousness for the individual without some reference to what is independent of thought, nor could there be an independent order of objects without some reference to a consciousness capable of perceiving it". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 323-24.

³⁵⁹Action, p. 417.

³⁶⁰Ibid. "In claiming to make objects gravitate around thought, criticism had placed itself away from the center as if to consider this spectacle from the outside; and if it has attended especially to the centripetal movement which brings all things back to the subject, it is because it remained still located on the outside, as if to justify the usefulness of its effort and the novelty of its perspective". Ibid.

³⁶¹Ibid.

³⁶²Ibid.

³⁶³L'Action(1893), p. 457. "To be, and to be in oneself, through another, therein resides the mystery of

objective existence, the mystery of every borrowed existence which does not have its source in itself and which yet does not cease to subsist. But it is no longer enough to conceive the possibility of this existence. We must see how it is real and necessarily real: under what conditions can knowledge and will be creative of their object? Action, p. 417.

364 L'Action (1893), pp. 458-59.

365 Action, p. 419. "If things are because God sees them, they are at first only passive of His creative action and as though nonexistent in themselves. But if things are active and truly real, if they subsist under their objective aspect, in short, if they are, it is because the divine eye sees them through the eye of the creature itself, no longer insofar as He creates them, but insofar as they are created and their author makes Himself passive of their proper action. They do not consist in an abstract and intelligible possibility of perception; their living reality depends on there being, joined to universal science and the divine omnipresence, a knowledge, at once total and singular, of all the partial syntheses garnered by all the disseminated sensibilities and reasons". Ibid.

366 Ibid. "Things, then are what they are, phenomenal and real, only to the extent that, passive and active, they have initiative and power over their very cause, thus meeting their principle and the end of their unfolding in one and the same center, from which they draw the original unity of their borrowed action and in which they find the final unity of the synthetic perceptions of which they are the antecedent condition". Ibid.

367 Ibid. Somerville observes that "Blondel is totally unsympathetic to any kind of idealistic or perceptual formalism; for while he does introduce the need of an infinite consciousness or supreme Monad, capable of perceiving all points of view at once, he also insists on the role of efficient and final cause. So it is not sufficient for the world to be perceived by the divine mind; it must also be actively produced and received. For just as the objectively real stands in a mediating position between the necessary and free operations of the human will, and just as the experience of objectivity requires, from the cognitive point of view, active production as well as passive reception, something analogous to this double movement of volition and cognition must also be found in the first existential Cause of all being". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 325.

368 Action, p. 419.

³⁶⁷L'Action(1893), p. 460.

³⁷⁰Action, p. 420. "Not that the relative is in the least necessary; it is real only to the extent that it receives from the absolute the gift of being cause within the absolute itself; a conditional necessity which takes nothing away from the sovereign independence of the first cause, but which simply manifests to what condescendence on its part the existence of the secondary causes is subordinated". Ibid.

³⁷¹L'Action(1893), p. 461.

³⁷²Action, p. 421.

³⁷³Ibid. , p. 422.

³⁷⁴Ibid. "Since what is necessarily objective for man expresses what is freely objective for God by reason of His creative action, the justification of objectivity is indivisibly linked to the problem of the justification of the Uniquely Necessary. Without God, who must be included in the totality, nothing can be for man. That is why the metaphysical option, which subordinates human life and action to the exigencies of an objective moral order, carries with it the implicit recognition that this order derives its imperative character from the Absolute whose will it expresses. without this identification, none of the terms in the series could be represented as sharing in the unconditional and inviolable necessity of the unconditioned source. On the other hand, when man does recognize the moral necessity inherent in the order of ends by subordinating his action to its imperatives, he begins to will freely all that God has freely willed by His creative action. At this moment, what appeared to be a coercive necessity for man becomes free, and man shares in God's freedom". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 326-27.

³⁷⁵Action, p. 422. "If man is to become what he deeply wants to be, he must bow before the exigencies of an objective order of values that seems to alienate him from himself by introducing a barrier between his two voluntary operations. How, then, is adequation possible, and how can the subject communicate with himself through the mediation of what is not himself? It is precisely because there is an element in knowledge that cannot be subjectivized that we are able to become true subjects. We recover our true self in reality the moment we allow reality to rule in us. We may accept it freely in a movement of love, or we may reject it without destroying it. In the first case, what seemed to be an obstacle to self-realization becomes a bond of unity, or a kind of highway enabling the free will to participate in the inner plenitude of the necessary will which wills the

totality. In the second case, the same reality stands as a wedge between the two poles of our being, a source of internal contradiction that can forever separate us from ourselves. The sceptre of being is a rod of iron and an instrument of division for those who refuse their free allegiance, but it is a unifying instrument of peace for those who understand that in the moral and metaphysical order there is nothing so free as that which is necessary". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 327.

374 Action, p. 422.

377 Ibid.

378 Ibid.

379 Ibid., pp. 422-23. "As a principle of mediation or as a bond, the objectively real is the vinculum in a threefold sense: (1) It is the bond between God's free creative action and the necessary movement whereby all things return to the source. Wherever anything exists, finality is immanent to the efficient cause, and being is nothing more nor less than the turning point of a twofold action that comes out from God and then returns to Him. (2) The objectively real is the vinculum between man's primordial and necessary will and his deliberate or free will, the point where finality is integrated into efficiency when the series of means becomes an organism of ends. (3) The objectively real is the vinculum between God and man, since God's objectification for us is identical with the real world which links the two phases of our subjectivity. By contact with the real world outside him, man discovers through experience, that is, a posteriori, the embodiment of what was already contained a priori in his originating or primordial will; and it is seen that there is no contradiction between man's subjective aspirations and the imperatives of the objective order of ends. The only possible contradiction lies within man himself, in his ability to render sterile the vitalizing action of a truth that commands only to liberate and imposes an external rule only to deepen the interiority of the subject, so that it may to some degree share in the self-adequation of the pure Subject". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 327-28.

380 Action, p. 423. Somerville writes that "the Creator is not an ideal and idle spectator who, in witnessing His creation, gives it being. He must also deliberately produce it in all its details. Thus, the being of finite things requires more than the divine perception, since their existence depends on the divine will as well as on His cognition or knowledge of them: Esse est principi et producti. God not only sees what He does but does what He

sees, so that the objectively real requires that, according to our human way of conceiving. He be both a passive witness and a productive agent. Now there are at least two ways in which God can be said to behold His creation: He can know it as the exemplary idea He has of it in His own mind, or He can know it in its objective existence, consequent upon the act of creation. In the latter case, since He undoubtedly knows what he does or has done. He is cognitively aware of His creation in and through His creative action. But He may also know it through the eyes and experience of His rational creatures. Each person is a kind of window or center of perception opening out onto the whole of reality: a subjective bond or vinculum acting as a point of reference into which nature flows and from which it receives back more than it gives. Since the number of monads which constitute focuses of perception from different points of view is incalculably great, God's access to His creation, through the multitude of subjective vincula in time and space, becomes coextensive with the number of persons who perceive, have perceived, or ever will perceive. As the subjective Vinculum vinculorum, He is simultaneously conscious of all that they experience and know. In them He passively receives and actively produces the objective world which He also produces and receives as creator". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 328-29.

³⁰¹ Action, p. 423.

³⁰² Ibid. "It could be that man, who stands at the summit of rational creation, has been assigned this role of universal mediator. As the microcosm, who includes all the perfection of lower nature in himself, man is the fullest expression of God's own perfection in the objective order: Imago Dei. Moreover, as a subject, he is the bond of creation who, in his perception of the world, receives its influence and, after synthesizing it in himself, gives back to the world more than he receives. So he appears to be the objective as well as the subjective vinculum. But actually his mediation is deficient in both orders: individual men, as well as all men taken together, fail to will explicitly all that the necessary will prescribes on the implicit level. By himself, man cannot realize the perfect adequation of the two wills. And this subjective failure also makes it impossible for man to be the objective mediator, since he is not the full and adequate expression of God's creative and objectivizing intention. He is not what he ought to be". James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 329-330.

³⁰³ Action, p. 423. "Blondel is not attempting to demonstrate the fact of the incarnation; for, if reason can show that it is neither absurd nor contradictory, it still cannot prove that such an event has taken place. As far as

philosophy is concerned it can only provide congruent reasons that would indicate that such an event is not inappropriate. But in the end the question must be left open. But, by the same token, if one is to explore every hypothesis that might offer a solution to the problem of perfect adequation, the consummatory event cannot be ruled out, since it would fulfill the need for a subjective and an objective mediation. God is present in all His manifestations; and if none of them, not even man, reveals Him perfectly, there is still room for at least one utterance that would be at once the revealing Word and the plenary Response. In this hypothesis, the universal Mediator would be the Vinculum Substantiale, linking the human and the divine, in whom, for whom, and unto whom all things were made, the bond of all creation, recapitulating in Himself the ideal and the real perfection of the universe and realizing the adequation between what is done and willed in heaven and on earth; so that at one point the will of God and the will of man would perfectly coincide". James Somerville, Total Commitment, p. 331.

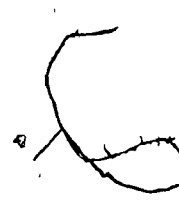
³²⁴ Action, p. 423.

³²⁵ Ibid. , pp. 423-24.

³²⁶ L'Action (1893), p. 465.

³²⁷ John McNeill, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 287.

³²⁸ Ibid.



NOTES: CONCLUSION

¹On the philosophical side, during the thesis defence Blondel was criticized for leading his thesis into the arena of theological concern. After its publication, Léon Brunschvicg had ponted that the notion of immanence is the condition of all modern philosophy and to show that in all acts there is an inevitable transcendence is to overstep the boundaries of modern thought. On the theological side Blondel was attacked by a Thomist-inspired Dominican M. B. Schwalm in the Revue thomiste who accused Blondel of a neo-Kantian subjectivism which had been infiltrated into France by the likes of Renouvier, Lachelier, and Boutroux as well as robbing the miracles of their value and eventually destroying the rational basis of faith. Furthermore, in the Annales de philosophie chrétienne the Abbé Hippolyte Gayraud had accused Blondel of 'naturalism' because Blondel had insisted on the necessity of the supernatural it robbed it of its gratuitous nature. In a word, the scholastics had an irrational fear of Kant. Cf. A. Leclère, "Le Mouvement catholique kantien en France à l'heure présente", Kantstudien, 7, 1902, p; 300-63. For a more detailed exposition of what has been said see, René Virgoulay, Blondel et le modernisme, pp. 1-32, 66-70. See also Gabriel Daly, Transcendence and Immanence, pp. 26-50. The confrontation between Bouillard and Duméry, which centered on the question of how to interpret Blondel's understanding of the supernatural, brought out the position that Blondel's L'Action (1893) was in the service of a foundational theology (Bouillard) on the one hand and a philosophy of religion (Duméry) on the other hand. See Michel Jouhaud, Le Problème de l'Etre et L'Expérience Morale chez Maurice Blondel, pp. 325-338. For another summary of the Bouillard-Duméry debate see James Somerville, Total Commitment, pp. 32-42.

²This is used by Koestler to overcome the one-sidedness of holism and atomism because both treat 'whole' and 'part' as absolutes without taking into account the hierarchical ladder of intermediary structures of sub-whole. The holon therefore is a Janus-faced entity whose self-assertive tendency is a dynamic manifestation of its wholeness, autonomy, and independence while the integrative tendency displays the dynamic expression of its partness, its dependence on the larger whole. We may recall that the Romans gave the god Janus a important role in their Pantheon as the keeper of doorways, facing both inward and outward. Arthur

Koestler, The Ghost in the Machine, p. 62-76.

²Maurice Blondel, Le lien substantiel et la substance composée d'après Leibniz, Texte Latin (1893), Introduction et traduction par Claude Troisfontaines, (Louvain, Paris, Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1972). It may be pointed out that a French commentary of that thesis appeared under the title of Une énigme historique. Le Vinculum Substantiale d'après Leibniz et l'ébauche d'un réalisme supérieur, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1930). The difference between these two works display the development that Blondel underwent in his shift from L'Action (1893) and his more 'classical' trilogy of La Pensée, L'Etre et les etres, and L'Action I & II. Blondel's latin thesis was a special historical study of the concept of the Vinculum which Leibniz, towards the end of his life, had put forth as a hypothesis concerning the nature of composite corporeal beings especially their substantiality and unity. The entire issue is set forth in a series of correspondences (during the years 1709-15) between Leibniz and the Jesuit theologian Bartholomew des Bosses who later became a professor of mathematics at Cologne. In a sense this was Leibniz's last attempt to put his philosophy in Scholastic terms. Leibniz had been criticized for not explaining the nature of the unity of the mind and body because, unlike Descartes, he merely established a simple correspondence with them. At the initial stage of the correspondence there is concern with the consistency between the monadology with Aristotelian metaphysics. But in the end Leibniz had to satisfy the Council of Trent's pronouncements on the transsubstantiation of the Eucharist. And, not only that, but he had to satisfy the demands for the substantial nature of compound bodies. This led to discussing the substantial reifying chain which links together the monads constituting a body of that nature, its relation to the monads and its role in making possible the unified nature and the continuous extension of such bodies. The question was whether such a link was a substantial form in the Scholastic manner. Although in the end both agreed in principal there were differences. However there was a greater realistic emphasis concerning the physical world. For these letters see Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Philosophical Papers and Letters, translated and edited, with an Introduction by Leroy E. Loemker, (Dordrecht/Holland/Boston- U.S.A.: D. Reidel Co., 1969), pp. 596-617.

³On this issue Copleston writes: "In the Cartesian philosophy there is a sharp dualism in the sense that the laws of mechanics and of efficient causality hold good in the material world, whereas in the spiritual world, there is freedom and teleology. Spinoza eliminates this dualism by means of his monistic hypothesis, assimilating the causal

connections between things to logical implication. As in a mathematical system conclusions flow from the premises, so in the universe of Nature modifications or what we call things together with their changes, flow from the one ontological principle, the divine substance. Leibniz, however, tries to combine mechanical causality with teleology. Each monad unfolds and develops according to an inner law of change, but the whole system of changes is directed, in virtue of the pre-established harmony, to the attainment of an end. Descartes excluded from natural philosophy or physics the consideration of final causes. But for Leibniz there is no need to choose between mechanical and final causality. They are really two aspects of one process". F. Copieston, A History of Philosophy. Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Leibniz, Vol. 4, (Garden City: Image Books, Doubleday & Co., 1963), p. 35. Cf. Claude Troisfontaines. Introduction à M. Blondel. Le lien substantiel et la substance composée d'après Leibniz, pp. 132-33.

"Ibid. , pp. 134-35. Troisfontaines states the matter in this way: "Le lien substantiel n'est pas simplement l'ensemble des relations monadiques contemplées par l'Intellect divin, mais c'est un effet de la Volonté divine. Cette Volonté est interprétée comme celle de l'Incarnation: Dieu veut se rendre passif de sa création en la voyant à travers une sensibilité humaine". Ibid. , pp. 137-38.

"Blondel states the matter by first making the analogy between the method of Plato and Leibniz: "De même que Platon vieillissant, selon un développement analogue et ultime de sa dialectique, avait, semble-t-il, tenté de revenir de la région des Idées au sensible, ainsi Leibniz, après avoir trouvé dans la force infuse aux monades les principes du mécanisme, semble avoir estimé que les sources mêmes de l'harmonie dynamique devaient être dérivées de plus haut et que la réalité des phénomènes - réduits une première fois à leur nature idéale et, comme il l'a dit, déjà bien fondés - devait être établie plus solidement, sans pour cela rétablir ou renforcer la décision des sens, mais en rejoignant plus parfaitement leur témoignage. On voit des lors qu'il en résulte aussitôt une recherche plus étendue. La première aporie avait été de savoir comment les monades entrent en communication mutuelle. La seconde difficulté est nouvelle et plus importante: il s'agit de savoir en raison de quelle harmonie l'essence de ce qui est perçu est en accord avec l'existence de ce qui est affirmé. Or il est capitale de noter que ces deux ordres doivent être radicalement distingués et en même temps être entièrement rapprochés.... Ce qui est proposé de façon analytique à l'esprit, est présent de façon synthétique à l'assentiment définitif. Ainsi de nombreuses années en avance, le fameux problème plus récent des jugements synthétiques devançant l'expérience

semble être résolu. Car chez Leibniz ce sont les choses expérimentées elles-mêmes qui annoncent quelque élément plus profond, car elles sont la double force et des compossibles déduits par Dieu et des réalités produites par Dieu ; elles réunissent la vérité a priori avec l'existence a posteriori ; en sorte que l'assentiment synthétique atteint réellement la nature métaphysique des choses". Maurice Blondel, Le lien substantiel et la substance composée d'après Leibniz, pp. 283-85.

⁷Aristotle, Poetics, translated & introduction by Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press; Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1986), p. 28.

⁸But what constitutes the Christian or religious mode of the self's appropriation in terms of an ethic is the shift from human time to God's time. What this entails is that the autobiography must be self-transcending. The life story that one writes must display that kind of self-transcendence that utters: 'I am the story that is written' in order to safeguard the sacred dimension of time because, as Dunne says, "God's own time is that of man's being". John Dunne, A Search for God in Time and Memory. (London: Sheldon Press, 1975), p. 224..

⁹Paul Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 452.

¹⁰Ibid. , p. 329. Ricoeur goes on to say that this transformation from alienation into beauty and freedom "for Spinoza ... is attained when knowledge of the self becomes equivalent to knowledge of the unique substance, but this speculative process has an ethical meaning insofar as the alienated individual is transformed by this knowledge of the whole. Philosophy is ethics; but this ethics is not purely concerned with morals. If we follow this Spinozistic usage of the word 'ethics', we must say that reflection is ethical before it becomes a critique of morality. Its goal is to grasp the ego in its effort to exist, in its desire to be. It is here that a reflective philosophy rediscovers and perhaps preserves both the Platonic idea that the source of knowledge is itself eros, desire, or love, and the Spinozistic idea that it is conatus, effort. This effort is a desire because it is never satisfied; but conversely, this desire is an effort because it is the affirmation of a unique being, not simply a lack of being. Effort and desire are the two aspects of this positing of the self in the first truth: I am". Paul Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations, p. 329.

¹¹François Mauriac, The Knot of Vipers, trans.

Gerard Hopkins with an introd. by David Lodge, (Penguin Modern Classics, 1985), pp. 208. George Bernanos, The Diary of a Country Priest, trans. Pamela Morris, (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1983), pp. 298.

¹²Two quotes here may be applicable to the novels in question: "In the final analysis, then, the prerogative of autobiography consists in this: that it shows us not the objective stages of a career - to discern these is the task of the historian - but that it reveals instead the effort of a creator to give the meaning of his own mythic tale. Everyman is the first witness of himself; yet the testimony that he thus produces constitutes no ultimate, conclusive authority - not only because objective scrutiny will always discover inaccuracies but much more because there is never an end to this dialogue of a life with itself in search of its own absolute. Here every man is for himself the existential stakes in a gamble that he cannot be entirely lost nor entirely won. Artistic creation is a struggle with the angel, in which the creator is the more certain of being vanquished since the opponent is still himself. He wrestles with his shadow, certain only of never laying hold of it". George Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography", in James Olney, ed. Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 48. "Thus confessional autobiography may be the record of a transformation of errors by values; or it may be a search for values, or even an attempt to justify the writer by an appeal to the lack of them". Stephen Spender, "Confessions and Autobiography", in *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹³François Mauriac, The Knot of Vipers, *passim*.

¹⁴George Bernanos, The Diary of a Country Priest, *passim*.

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